

# Managing Conflict in the Developing World

Essays from Emerging Scholars



**MANAGING CONFLICT IN THE  
DEVELOPING WORLD  
ESSAYS FROM EMERGING SCHOLARS**

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## FOREWORD

Conflicts between people are common – societies without difference, were they to exist, would be dull, lifeless, and stagnant. Conflict can be a means of expression, and a process for constructive change. All the world's most famous social movements – abolitionism, the suffragettes, Indian independence, the civil rights movement, internal resistance to South African apartheid, and so on – involved conflict between different parts of society that eventually led to positive change. However, it is how societies choose to manage such conflicts that is the great challenge.

However, sadly, conflict can often lead to violence and to the wider horrors of war. The great wars and genocides of history echo in our shared human consciences with the shame in what our humanity – or, more specifically, our lack of humanity – can lead to. With broad-based economic development comes the illusion that some societies have vanquished this darker side of their humanity. In fact the truth is that such societies have developed more resilient methods for managing conflict without resorting to violence or abuse. So whilst the developing world certainly does not hold the monopoly over violent conflict, the generally weaker social and institutional structures make this part of the world more prone to internal violence and civil war. Of the civil wars and rebellions that currently rage in the world, most are occurring within these very societies that have the least capacity to bring it under control.

It is this great moral and practical challenge that the minds of 2013's *Managing Conflict in the Developing World* students have set themselves to grapple with. These emerging scholars have striven to explore, to analyse, and most importantly, to *understand and explain* the dynamics of conflict. They have sought to seek out methods by which violent conflict can be managed, so that the horrors that accompany it may be contained.

Daniel Bennett incisively analyses the startlingly complex 'war' on drug cartels in Mexico; Thomas Brown and Robert Yeomans seek to elucidate different aspects on the violent conflict in Mali, grappling with real minority rights issues that have been hijacked by radical Islamism; and Matthew Stevens investigates the tragedy of the failure of international efforts in Syria, and what can be learnt for future attempts at peace. Catherine Wood, Patrick Wundke and Jess Longden turn their attentions to three different approaches for managing conflict – UN-led peacekeeping, mediation, and non-violence – finessing our knowledge about how these processes can be improved to do more good in the world.

I commend these top students from *Managing Conflict in the Developing World* on their essays, and I commend their work to you. Individually and collectively, these students' contributions to understanding violent conflict and how to handle it are to be greatly valued. If the world is to avert the mass suffering brought by war and mass human rights abuses and the mistakes of the past, new ideas from fresh minds – the work of emerging scholars such as these – are in great need. I hope that their insights can help contribute, in their own unassuming way, to our understanding of how to make the world a safer place.

Striving together –



Michael Cornish, December 2013

# THE WAR ON DRUGS IN MEXICO

by Daniel Bennett

All over the world, drug criminals carve their way through unsuspecting populations, preying on the desperate and the weak; they become powerful as more people become dependent on narcotics. This is especially true in the developing world, where governments lack the power to enforce drug laws, and entire populations become dependent on drugs as a livelihood or for use. Nowhere is that more obvious than in Mexico, where cartels have peddled drugs across the Rio Grande into the USA for massive profit for more than fifty years.<sup>1</sup> These organised crime syndicates have evolved over that time into effective paramilitary groups that can rely on drug money to fight Mexican military, police forces and one another while coercing almost all elements of the public sector.<sup>2,3</sup> Meaningful resolution of the drug conflict can only be achieved through careful evaluation of the history of the cartels and current difficulties in the drug war, and transforming the conflict with radical, innovative tactics and realistic approaches to implement these changes. It has become clear that last resort military action is not the answer to stopping the cartels. Instead, multilateral involvement by the international community is required to implement changes in Mexico and across the region to lead to a new era in which drugs are no longer a hallmark of the developing Americas.

## A history of drugs in Mexico and the Americas

The use of illegal drugs in America, Canada and the west increased as drug culture became more and more popular in the 1960s.<sup>4</sup> Increase in demand for drugs led to drug manufacture in third world countries: heroine in South East Asia and Cocaine in South and Latin America.<sup>5,6</sup> As the demand for cocaine grew, so too did the power of the Columbian cartels who distributed the drug directly into the USA. During the 1970s and 1980s, the importation of hard drugs into the USA from Latin and South America became so endemic that President Nixon declared the “War on Drugs”. With this declaration,

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<sup>1</sup> George Grayson, 2007, August, “Mexico and the Drug Cartels,” *Foreign Policy Research Institute website*, <http://www.fpri.org/enotes/200708.grayson.mexicodrugcartels.html>.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> Ioan Grillo, 2006, December 11, “Mexico cracks down on violence,” *Seattle PI website*, <http://www.seattlepi.com/national/article/Mexico-cracks-down-on-violence-1222154.php>.

<sup>4</sup> Niklas Pollard, 2005, June 30, “UN report puts world's illicit drug trade at estimated \$321b,” *Boston.com*, [http://www.boston.com/news/world/europe/articles/2005/06/30/un\\_report\\_puts\\_worlds\\_illicit\\_drug\\_trade\\_at\\_estimated\\_321b/](http://www.boston.com/news/world/europe/articles/2005/06/30/un_report_puts_worlds_illicit_drug_trade_at_estimated_321b/).

<sup>5</sup> Grayson, “Mexico and the Drug Cartels.”

<sup>6</sup> Pollard, “Drug trade at estimated \$321b.”

he created the Drug Enforcement Agency (DEA), who, in conjunction with the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), was able to put pressure on the trade routes between the USA and Columbia.<sup>7</sup> Mexican cartel infrastructure, which had long been in place to export heroine and cannabis into USA, suited the needs of Columbian cartels.<sup>8</sup> The Mexicans became middlemen, and the increase in trafficking lead to the growth in power of the Mexican drug cartel. In the late 1990s, the FBI and the DEA were able to make debilitating strikes against Columbian cartels, following a 13 year campaign against the paramilitary drug lords. Following this collapse, the Mexican cartels have been able to fill the market with their own products, grown locally, to the USA and the rest of the world.<sup>9</sup> The Mexican Cartel was divided in 1987 into multiple cartels, which, by functioning as autonomous components of a whole, would increase the resilience of the cartels against law enforcement agencies.<sup>10</sup> Peace between the newly formed cartels did not last long; rivalry quickly devolved into violence over valuable trafficking routes, forming the complex relationships between the cartels today.<sup>11,12,13</sup>

Until 2006 the Mexican government had maintained a passive attitude toward the cartels; cartel violence was largely directed inward, but the influence of drug money had reach far and wide.<sup>14,15</sup> When newly elected president Felipe Calderon ordered the deployment of 6,500 soldiers to the state of Michoacán, home to one of the larger cartels, the relationship between the government and the cartels changed. This initial action was the first major anti-drug policy implemented in Mexico; the cartels, however, were not displaced and instead reacted by targeting government officials, civilians and military in order to stem the power of the government to enforce drug law.<sup>16,17,18</sup> Now, vast sections of the country are under cartel control, some of which are run as quasi states, with laws

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<sup>7</sup> Colleen Cook, 2007, *Mexico's Drug Cartels*, Report for Congress (Washington, DC: Federation of American Scientists), <http://www.fas.org/sgp/crs/row/RL34215.pdf>.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

<sup>11</sup> Grayson, "Mexico and the Drug Cartels."

<sup>12</sup> Pollard, "Drug trade at estimated \$321b."

<sup>13</sup> Cook, *Mexico's Drug Cartels*.

<sup>14</sup> Grayson, "Mexico and the Drug Cartels."

<sup>15</sup> Cook, *Mexico's Drug Cartels*.

<sup>16</sup> Grayson, "Mexico and the Drug Cartels."

<sup>17</sup> Grillo, "Mexico cracks down on violence."

<sup>18</sup> Cook, *Mexico's Drug Cartels*.

for civilians to follow.<sup>19</sup> The violence has escalated significantly since 2008, and to date an estimated 90,000 people have been killed and 1.6 million displaced as a result of cartel-related violence.<sup>20,21,22</sup>

### **The difficulties of stopping drug violence**

While it would appear that cartel leaders are being frequently arrested or killed, the Mexican Government is far from winning the war. At present they continue to fight the cartels by removing high ranking cartel members, or 'narcos', hoping that the lack of leadership would lead to a disbanding of the criminal agencies. However, the only real result has been the cartel weakening for a time, at a cost to human life, while junior narcos fight to fill the power vacuum.<sup>23,24</sup> In fact, the violence is so destructive that rival cartel leaders will often leak compromising information about their peers to the authorities to spark such conflict.<sup>25</sup> Eventually, the cartels settle down with the most ruthless of the contenders in positions of power; this has led to evolution from the greedy and elusive cartels of the past to the power hungry paramilitary cartels of today.<sup>26,27</sup> Targeting the bosses has proved ineffective at preventing cartel violence, and so too has large-scale apprehension of narcos of all ranks. Instead, it demonstrates the inefficacy of targeting ranking drug leaders and instead calls for more effective strategies for limiting cartel influence.<sup>28,29</sup>

Apprehension and prosecution of drug criminals also proves difficult due to the large amount of money at the cartel's disposal.<sup>30</sup> Corruption is rife in the Mexican Government, military and other federal offices and combinations of bribery and intimidation make cartel criminals all but impossible

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<sup>19</sup> Guy Lawson, 2009, March 4, "The Making of a Narco State," *Rolling Stone*.

<sup>20</sup> Grayson, "Mexico and the Drug Cartels."

<sup>21</sup> Cook, *Mexico's Drug Cartels*.

<sup>22</sup> Pulitzer Center on Crisis Reporting, 2008, December 27, *Mexico: Trouble in Culiacán*, <http://pulitzercenter.org/projects/north-america/mexico-trouble-culiacán>.

<sup>23</sup> Grayson, "Mexico and the Drug Cartels."

<sup>24</sup> Cook, *Mexico's Drug Cartels*.

<sup>25</sup> Richard Marosi, 2008, April 23, "Mexican general makes explosive accusations," *Los Angeles Times website*, <http://latimesblogs.latimes.com/laplaza/2008/04/mexican-general.html>.

<sup>26</sup> Grayson, "Mexico and the Drug Cartels."

<sup>27</sup> Cook, *Mexico's Drug Cartels*.

<sup>28</sup> Grayson, "Mexico and the Drug Cartels."

<sup>29</sup> Cook, *Mexico's Drug Cartels*.

<sup>30</sup> Grayson, "Mexico and the Drug Cartels."

to prosecute.<sup>31,32</sup> This is especially true in the Mexican judiciary system; freedom can be bought by anyone, and judges who are not willing to take bribes are killed to make way for those who will. The only time any ranking cartel members are prosecuted is when they are apprehended by US federal officers of the DEA or FBI or if rival cartels are paying to keep them in jail.<sup>33</sup> The difficulty in fighting the cartels directly, combined with the incentive for people on the ground to look the other way, means that the government has been impotent to do anything major to restore their authority, law and order.<sup>34</sup>

Cartel members have begun running for positions in parliament to influence drug law directly; they use terror tactics to intimidate their constituents into voting for them. It is not uncommon for a teacher, politician or celebrity to be kidnapped and forced into spreading pro-cartel propaganda to influence public opinion, and politicians opposing cartel candidates frequently disappear.<sup>35,36,37</sup> This public influence campaign is helped by the targeting of journalists and reporters who attempt to shed light on cartel ruthlessness. Since 2006, over 100 reporters in Mexico have been killed or disappeared while trying to reveal the horrific nature of cartel ruthlessness.<sup>38,39</sup> Many executions are made public by the cartels, either on the internet or in public places, making examples of any who would challenge them, and thus highlighting the impotence of the police and military to protect the Mexican people.<sup>40</sup>

As the war rages on, the Mexican public continues to suffer; funds badly needed for public utilities are being spent on corrupt military forces or ineffective and often criminal police.<sup>41,42</sup> Mexico is in a near state of martial law, in which the military and law enforcement officials act with impunity,

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<sup>31</sup> Ibid.

<sup>32</sup> Cook, *Mexico's Drug Cartels*.

<sup>33</sup> Marosi, "Explosive accusations."

<sup>34</sup> Mark Stevenson, 2009, January 25, "Mexican top cops linked to cartel," *The Herald*.

<sup>35</sup> Grayson, "Mexico and the Drug Cartels."

<sup>36</sup> Cook, *Mexico's Drug Cartels*.

<sup>37</sup> Kelly Heffernan-Tabor, 2011, May 29, "Mexican Authorities Arrest 46 Suspected Drug Gang Members," *Digitriad website*, <http://www.digitriad.com/news/national/article/177210/175/Mexican-Authorities-Arrest-46-Suspected-Drug-Gang-Members>.

<sup>38</sup> Traci Carl, 2009, November 3, "Progress in Mexico drug war is drenched in blood," Associated Press.

<sup>39</sup> Heffernan-Tabor, "Mexican Authorities Arrest 46."

<sup>40</sup> Carl, "Progress in Mexico drug war."

<sup>41</sup> Marosi, "Explosive accusations."

<sup>42</sup> Stevenson, "Mexican top cops."

issuing threats to civilians and torturing witnesses into testimony. Human rights abuse by authorities in Mexico became so bad that in 2009, the Federal Investigations Agency, which was created specifically to investigate high level drug crime, was disbanded by the president following his declaration of its failure.<sup>43,44</sup> One in five of its members were being investigated for human rights abuses, many of who bribed the judiciary to let them go. Such behaviour blurred the grey area between the cartels and the government even further and hindered the efforts of the government against the cartels.<sup>45,46,47</sup>

The power of the cartels comes from their money, which mostly comes from the streets of the USA, among other developed countries. Without this money, they would not be able to corrupt the Mexican military, government, police forces, judiciary and legal systems or act against the law with impunity.<sup>48,49</sup> Limiting this drug income is both very important and very difficult and requires dedicated multilateral approaches by the US and the Mexican government. The cartels also obtain their weapons through illegal means, with 87% of confiscated cartel firearms being traced back to US origins.<sup>50</sup> The ease of access to weapons means that the cartels can arm large portions of the Mexican youth at a very low cost; most sign up because of the promise of riches that running drugs offers them. In a country with very few alternatives, cartel work seems preferable to working for almost nothing in legitimate business.<sup>51</sup> These factors, with both internal and external origins, implicate the role of the rest of the world, the USA especially, in responsibility to aid Mexico in overcoming the violence which is tearing it apart.<sup>52</sup>

## **Tactics for reinventing the drug war**

The US federal government has not forsaken its responsibility in the drug crisis in Mexico. In 2009, Secretary of State Hilary Clinton acknowledged the US's responsibility in the drug conflict, and

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<sup>43</sup> Marosi, "Explosive accusations."

<sup>44</sup> Stevenson, "Mexican top cops."

<sup>45</sup> Grayson, "Mexico and the Drug Cartels."

<sup>46</sup> Marosi, "Explosive accusations."

<sup>47</sup> Stevenson, "Mexican top cops."

<sup>48</sup> Grayson, "Mexico and the Drug Cartels."

<sup>49</sup> Cook, *Mexico's Drug Cartels*.

<sup>50</sup> Grillo, "Mexico cracks down on violence."

<sup>51</sup> Cook, *Mexico's Drug Cartels*.

<sup>52</sup> Grayson, "Mexico and the Drug Cartels."

since then, US presence in Mexico has increased dramatically.<sup>53</sup> The US and Mexican governments have adopted a clear division of labour in fighting cartel dominance; the Mexican Government focuses on preventing cartel activity within Mexican borders, and US federal offices attempt to prevent the passage of drugs across the borders into the USA and overseas.<sup>54</sup> Since the beginning of the war in 2006, the seizure of cocaine in the USA has declined by 41%, which is believed to be a direct result of US border security enforcement.<sup>55,56</sup> Mexican enthusiasm in dealing with this issue has been unprecedented, with President Calderon allowing the US Government to act freely within its borders to uphold their responsibility.<sup>57,58</sup> This reduction in drug trafficking, however, has not led to a reduction in violence; in fact, the infighting between cartels has become more intense.<sup>59</sup>

Thus far, in Columbia and in Mexico, the US federal departments involved in combating organised drug crime have been very effective. However, the agreement in division of responsibility between the US and Mexico means that US federal agencies cannot act on intelligence they acquire about potential drug criminals for fear of encroaching on Mexican sovereignty.<sup>60,61</sup> Likewise, they cannot share information about drug crime with Mexican police and military intelligence divisions because of the corrupt nature of those agencies.<sup>62</sup> As a result, the USA has to sit on good intelligence that, if acted on, could deal serious blows against the cartels. The success of the US Government in Columbia was partly due to the ability of US agencies to act freely on Columbian soil in the pursuit of drug criminals.<sup>63,64,65</sup> The FBI and DEA did not abuse that right and, unlike the Mexican military, did not take liberties with the basic human rights of the locals. Increased autonomy of the US anti-drug

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<sup>53</sup> Cook, *Mexico's Drug Cartels*.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid.

<sup>56</sup> Reuters, 2007, September 14, "High U.S. cocaine cost shows drug war working: Mexico," *Reuters website*, <http://www.reuters.com/article/2007/09/14/us-mexico-drugs-idUSN1422771920070914>.

<sup>57</sup> Grayson, "Mexico and the Drug Cartels."

<sup>58</sup> Cook, *Mexico's Drug Cartels*.

<sup>59</sup> Carl, "Progress in Mexico drug war."

<sup>60</sup> Grayson, "Mexico and the Drug Cartels."

<sup>61</sup> Cook, *Mexico's Drug Cartels*.

<sup>62</sup> Stratfor, 2012, January 24, "Stratfor an authority on strategic and tactical intelligence issues," *Stratfor website*.

<sup>63</sup> Grayson, "Mexico and the Drug Cartels."

<sup>64</sup> Cook, *Mexico's Drug Cartels*.

<sup>65</sup> Stratfor, "Stratfor an authority."

agencies within Mexican borders could lead to more successful campaigns against the cartels that would not require mass mobilisation of soldiers and would allow Mexico to focus on more pressing domestic issues such as public health, education and human rights abuses by authorities.

The key to resolving the drug conflict lies in the innovation of domestic and international policy of countries in the region. USA and Mexico are two of many affected nations that are interested in providing assistance to stop the drug trafficking and violence that go hand in hand. If the trafficking of drugs across the Rio Grande can be made a less lucrative enterprise, then there would be less incentive for young Mexicans to join the cartels and put their lives and the lives of others at risk. RAND corporation released a report stating that every dollar spent on US domestic drug education campaigns and government funded resources to fight drug addiction is worth seven dollars spent on anti-drug operations in Mexico.<sup>66</sup> The establishment of US domestic drug assistance and education programs would reduce the demand for drugs in the US and reduce the income and influence of the cartels.<sup>67</sup> The tactic of fighting fire with fire has thus far proved ineffective, but with implementation of policy that requires large scale cooperation between regional governments, it is possible to realise a Mexico free from the scourge of drug conflict.

Control of gun traffic into Mexico is crucial to stopping drug violence; disarming the cartels would limit their ability to effectively use violence against authorities. This is difficult in practice, as the majority of Mexico's illegal firearms come from the USA, whose constitution affords almost anyone the right to carry firearms with little official oversight as too does Mexico's.<sup>68,69</sup> Controlling firearms is a very heated topic in US politics, on which change is unlikely to occur despite the havoc US weapons are wreaking across the border. US authorities are doing all they can within the confines of the law to limit the large scale export of weapons, an endeavour that is far easier to propose than to carry out.<sup>70,71</sup> More innovative tactics are required, in conjunction with gun control efforts already being made by US federal agencies, in order to stop the drug violence.

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<sup>66</sup> Peter Rydell and Susan Everingham, 1994, *Controlling Cocaine: Supply Versus Demand Programs* (Santa Monica: RAND Corporation).

<sup>67</sup> Ibid.

<sup>68</sup> Grayson, "Mexico and the Drug Cartels."

<sup>69</sup> Reuters, "High U.S. cocaine cost."

<sup>70</sup> Grayson, "Mexico and the Drug Cartels."

<sup>71</sup> Cook, *Mexico's Drug Cartels*.

Trust needs to be established between the Mexican people and government offices so people are able to safely rely on those charged with their protection. This can be achieved by fighting corruption in Mexico. Criminal trials might become more just by being held out of Mexico, which could limit the opportunity for narcos to coerce judges into dismissing cases. The holding of Mexican criminals in US jails may be an extreme method to preventing judicial corruption, but it would limit the ability of high-ranking convicted gangsters from buying their way out of poorly run Mexican facilities. While this increase in punitive measures against Mexican drug criminals may help to keep them off the streets, it is not a preventative measure and does not target the roots of drug crime in Mexico. Public anti-corruption campaigns and increasing oversight of finances of high-powered Mexican officials would make it difficult for anyone to accept a bribe and would make wide-spread corruption difficult to contain.

### **Approaches to the management of drug conflict**

No single approach to conflict resolution is the answer to stopping the violence in Mexico; rather, multiple approaches, which depend on effective intervention from the international community in a multilateral way, are required. The first element of the solution to the conflict is the establishment of regional architecture by the international community with a focus on assisting enforcement of drug law in the region. This could be achieved by the formation of a new international North and South American institution charged with preventing illegal drug activity from crossing continental and state borders. This organisation would become a forum for both developed and developing countries to propose and ask for new multilateral and innovative plans for fighting drug crime. The Mexican Cartels have become too entrenched for the government to effectively enforce drug law, even through undesirable military action.<sup>72,73,74</sup> This new international organisation would, with Mexican support, allow for oversight from US and Canadian government agencies in all areas of Mexican government scourged by corruption. This new organisation would be tasked with monitoring the finances of high-ranking Mexican public servants and following drug money paper trails to gather intelligence on financial interests in Mexico from around the world. It would be in charge of bringing all of the drug corruption in Mexico to the fore so that it may be addressed, a step that is crucial to the resolution of drug conflict. It has application not just in Mexico but in any country in the Americas that is struggling in the battle against drug crime and violence.

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<sup>72</sup> Grayson, "Mexico and the Drug Cartels."

<sup>73</sup> Cook, *Mexico's Drug Cartels*.

<sup>74</sup> Carl, "Progress in Mexico drug war."

This organisation could also become a new sector for international law for the special prosecution of high-ranking drug criminals. Regional drug laws could be created and agreed upon by all nations involved, and this organisation could act as a court for the trials of particularly influential drug criminals. Special consideration would need to be taken to decide what kinds of drug crime would lie in the jurisdiction of this court. All involved nations would also need to agree on what actions constitute high-ranking drug crime, given the different attitudes of countries to different controlled substances. This would allow for Mexican cartel leaders to be tried on foreign soil, away from the corrupting influence of their peers. It would also allow for the holding of Mexicans in prisons outside of Mexico, which would be more capable of holding those convicted of drug crimes. This international court would perhaps be the most difficult aspect of the regional antidrug architecture to establish due to the long-term loss of sovereignty countries in the region would have to accept, but it is likely that most states, especially the very poor, would be able to make that sacrifice in the interest of preventing the influence of drug criminals within their borders.

Peacekeeping could also be widely successful in the prevention of the targeting of civilians in Mexico. Peacekeeping operations issued by the aforementioned international organisation would not have a major role in the apprehension of drug criminals or the enforcement of drug law, but would instead protect civilians from being targeted by the cartels or the government. Their mandate would need to be agreed upon by both: the countries offering its soldiers as peacekeepers and the state whose civilians are under threat, and should always include the ability to engage any target legitimately believed to be a threat to the civilian safety. The deployment of peacekeepers in Mexico is not ideal because it would put international soldiers in the line of fire of the cartels, who have shown no hesitation in performing horrific acts of violence on or in the face of arbitrators.<sup>75,76,77</sup> However, the effect peacekeepers would have is too great to ignore; the Mexican military is an easily bribed, shoot on sight target for cartel paramilitaries and is now ineffective in the protection of Mexican civilians. Peacekeepers could be deployed to escort and protect high-risk civilians such as journalists, politicians and public servants whose lives and families may be in danger because they have taken a stand against cartel coercion.<sup>78</sup> Peacekeepers are not a permanent solution any conflict, but they are effective at limiting the outbreak of violence and are crucial in the formation of negative peace. In the case of

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<sup>75</sup> Grayson, "Mexico and the Drug Cartels."

<sup>76</sup> Cook, *Mexico's Drug Cartels*.

<sup>77</sup> Carl, "Progress in Mexico drug war."

<sup>78</sup> Ibid.

Mexico, they are essential to the protection of civilians and the allowance of the facts about cartel activity to come to light.

However, these aforementioned approaches to conflict resolution, while effective in their respective roles, do not target drug crime in Mexico at its source. The final and most important step is the provision of international aid, which is required to rebuild a Mexico able to enforce its own laws. Mexico is unique in that it has a very stable government despite its developing nature. Its constitution is modelled in the image of the US constitution and for the most part is centred on the interests of the people of Mexico.<sup>79</sup> In a Mexico not plagued by drug corruption, the government would be able to distribute any international aid in a manner that suited its people best. Public services that have been overlooked since the eruption of large-scale conflict could receive much needed aid, with foreign powers certain that donated money was not going to find its way into the hands of drug lords. Healthcare, education, emergency services and civil infrastructure have all been overlooked as a result of drug violence, and all of these sectors would benefit from foreign aid. By the provision of viable work alternatives, young people would no longer have to choose between joining the cartels or poverty for themselves and their families.

The drug war in Mexico so far has proved to be anything but a standard developing world conflict. Despite the efforts of the developed world to control drug trafficking, drugs are still able to be sold with relative impunity across the globe. This leads to the conclusion that the direct combating of drug criminals, as has been the strategy for more than 50 years, is not the solution to drug violence but rather an aspect of it. If anything, history has shown that the only way to stop the cunning of organised crime is even greater cunning of authorities through unique and inventive policy. The simple use of force against criminal syndicates begins an escalation that leads to the degradation of government legitimacy and efficacy, as was the case in Mexico. Careful understanding of the history and current difficulties of conflict is essential to the formation of radical, innovative tactics and realistic approaches for their implementation. These are the keys to the transformation of all conflict, not just in Mexico, but in any country in which violence takes precedence over the wellbeing of those who call that country home.

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<sup>79</sup> Cook, *Mexico's Drug Cartels*.

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# THE TUAREG PUZZLE IN MALI

by Thomas Brown

The fall of Muammar Gaddafi's regime in Libya in late 2011 is widely regarded as the catalyst that sparked the current Mali crisis. Well before this, however, the Malian Government's inability to provide for its northern citizens was fuelling instability in the region. It is clear that the long-standing discontent in northern Mali, particularly from the Tuareg ethnic group, is central to the current conflict.<sup>80</sup> While the conflict was a result of a combination of different factors, many of these intersected with or were a product of this root cause. While the aims of rebel groups were unrealistic and largely did not reflect the views of the populations they claimed to represent, their popularity and military success exemplify the dangers of leaving these issues unchecked, and should bring them to the forefront of conflict resolution and peacebuilding in Mali. This essay will analyse current commitments, and make further recommendations to resolving the grievances of Tuareg and other northern minorities as a means to build peace and avoid the recurrence of conflict in Mali.

Northern Mali is the theatre of the conflict, a vast and sparsely populated area making up two thirds of Mali's land mass but containing only an estimated 10% of the population.<sup>81</sup> Of this 10%, an estimated 3.5% are Tuareg, 1% are Arab and the remainder Songhay; this ethnic diversity is representative of Mali as a whole.<sup>82</sup> The Tuareg are a traditionally nomadic people of the Sahara, and form a minority in Mali as well as in Niger, Libya and Burkina Faso. They are thought not to form a majority in any area of Northern Mali except in the Kidal region.<sup>83</sup> The fall of Gaddafi's regime in Libya saw an influx of militarised Tuaregs fleeing to northern Mali, which funnelled into a separatist movement called the National Movement for the Liberation of Azawad (MNLA).<sup>1</sup> The MLNA subsequently launched offensives against the Malian government, but the idea of Tuareg separatism, and the use of violence to attain it, is nothing new in Mali, nor are the root causes for their actions: long standing political and economic marginalisation at the hands of ruling powers.

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<sup>80</sup> International Crisis Group, 2012, July 18, "Mali: Avoiding Escalation," *Africa Report No. 189*, <http://www.crisisgroup.org/en/regions/africa/west-africa/mali/189-mali-avoiding-escalation.aspx>.

<sup>81</sup> 2013, July 2, "Who's Who in Northern Mali," *African Defense*, <http://www.african-defense.com/?p=2513>.

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<sup>83</sup> Ibid.

The Tuaregs' main grievance lies in neglect by the state – politically, economically, and especially in times of environmental hardship.<sup>84</sup> Under the French and during early independence, the north was brutally suppressed or simply abandoned. Campaigns of terror against the population were instigated; earlier were massacres, destruction of crops and herds, and poisoning of wells at the hands of the government, and later came reprisals by pro-government militias.<sup>85</sup> Politically, Tuaregs were extremely marginalised, allowed only isolated token roles as the north was placed under military rule and governed by the Songhai.<sup>86</sup> Following the 1991 accords, there has been a significant increase in political representation in the Malian state, but the traditional elite dominates the roles. Economically, there has been a notable lack of investment and infrastructure in the area.<sup>87</sup> Northerners are penalised with extreme isolation due to a severe lack of transport infrastructure to the rest of the country.<sup>88</sup> More central to Tuareg grievances, however, is the inequality in provision of basic services such as health and education, which has been shown, at least up until the mid-1990s, to be exceptional relative to other regions.<sup>89</sup> This political and economic marginalisation, combined with constant food insecurity, droughts and famines, weighs heavily on the Tuareg people. The majority of Tuaregs were forced from their traditional nomadic lifestyles into disillusioned, sedentary existences in the underdeveloped north.<sup>90</sup>

The history of Tuareg rebellion can be traced back to initial resistance against the French in the 19<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>91</sup> Since then, there have been at least three post-independence rebellions that have significantly disrupted the country. The failure of meaningful change resulting from each uprising sparked the next. More recently, there have been genuine attempts to address the causes of conflict, but poor implementation, corruption and the dominance of the tribal elite meant that northern communities continued to live in face of economic and political inequality and food insecurity.<sup>1</sup> After

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<sup>84</sup> Minority Rights Group International, 2013, May, "Mali: Tuareg profile and historical context," *World Directory of Minorities and Indigenous Peoples*, <http://www.minorityrights.org/?lid=5315>.

<sup>85</sup> International Crisis Group, "Mali: Avoiding Escalation."

<sup>86</sup> Macartan Humphreys and Habaye Ag Mohamed, 2005, "Senegal and Mali," in *Understanding Civil War: Evidence and Analysis (Volume 1: Africa)*, edited by Paul Collier and Nicholas Sambanis (Washington, DC: World Bank Publications), <http://www.columbia.edu/~mh2245/papers1/hm2005.pdf>.

<sup>87</sup> Jean-Pierre Olivier de Sardan, 2013, "The "Tuareg question" in Mali today," *Mapinduzi Journal 3: Identity and governance in Africa*, <http://www.bu.edu/wara/files/2013/06/mali-the-Tuareg-question.pdf>.

<sup>88</sup> Ibid.

<sup>89</sup> Humphreys and Mohamed, "Senegal and Mali."

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<sup>91</sup> Ibid.

the 1990 rebellion, numerous rebel groups put forward a coordinated response and negotiated a peace process called the National Pact. It acknowledged the north's economic marginalisation and sought to mend the inequality through a ten year economic recovery plan.<sup>1</sup> It also saw the integration of rebels into the national forces and the transfer of state power to regional institutions. This decentralisation introduced an extensive, layered administration system, with elected councils at each level.<sup>92</sup> The country was divided into nine regions, each of which contains a number of districts known as cercles, and each of these is divided into communes, which are in turn divided into villages or quarters. However, this process faced a number of problems: the transfer of resources and responsibilities to these bodies was slow, and the level and methods of cooperation between these layers were not clearly defined.<sup>93</sup> As a result, the hope of grassroots democracy was supplanted by the reality of extensive government supervision, frustrating regional leaders who were thus required to work closely with the government. Decentralisation also opened up opportunities for corruption, mismanagement and abuse of power, making regional 'big men' the main benefactors of the changes.<sup>94</sup> The inability of these strategies to improve conditions for the wider northern community has resulted in periodic resurgences in conflict.

The history of brutality, neglect, marginalisation and broken government promises provides the context for the current crisis. It can be viewed as the latest episode in the narrative of Tuareg rebellion, which intersected with a number of other factors to inflame the conflict to an unprecedented scale. Many of these factors can be directly linked to the Malian Government's inability to provide for the north. The collapse of Gaddafi's regime was one predictable component, but the reason so many Malians were part of Gaddafi's armed forces in the first place is because Gaddafi had seized upon the poverty and marginalisation of Malian Tuaregs to recruit them.<sup>95</sup> Another crucial component of the conflict was the rise in influence of radical Islamist groups in Mali. The Islamists have demonstrated that they cannot recruit on the basis of their extreme ideology, as it is largely foreign to Malians, but rather through their strong economic position. The two most dominant groups, Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) and Ansar Dine, follow the Wahhabi strain of Islam,

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<sup>92</sup> Susanna Wing, 2013, May 29, "Briefing Mali: Politics of a Crisis," *Oxford Journals: African Affairs*, <http://afraf.oxfordjournals.org/content/early/2013/05/28/afraf.adt037.full>.

<sup>93</sup> Ibid.

<sup>94</sup> Morten Boas, 2013, April 16, "Mali 2012 - A Crisis of Governance," *Social Science Research Network*, [http://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract\\_id=2251756](http://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=2251756).

<sup>95</sup> Peter Gwin, 2011, August 31, "Former Qaddafi Mercenaries Describe Fighting in Libyan War," *Pulitzer Center website*, <http://pulitzercenter.org/reporting/libya-qaddafi-tuareg-rebels-war-obama>.

in contrast with that practiced by Malians, who are predominantly Sunni and Sufi.<sup>96</sup> Criminal activities gave the Islamists sufficient financial resources to recruit in large numbers; it allowed them to capitalise on the poverty and lack of economic opportunities in Northern Mali, where affiliations of ethnicity and religious affiliations were outweighed by the attraction to money and status.<sup>97</sup> Finally, a major catalyst for the Malian conflict was the deposition of President Touré by the Malian military ahead of the April 2012 elections, a response to the government's handling of the Tuareg rebellion. The resulting instability provided the incentive for MLNA and extremist Islamist rebel groups to put aside their ideological differences to gain control of the northern regions of Mali.<sup>98</sup> While highly unexpected, we see how this event intersected with factors rooted in Tuareg grievance to propel the conflict forward to unprecedented levels. The common element of Tuareg grievances in the components of the conflict provides strong evidence to suggest that the failure to address the issues in the immediate future will likely result in a further continuation of this cycle of violence.

There are many contextual parallels with the current conflict that provide the capacity to improve on approaches of the past, but will also pose difficulties in gaining the trust of those who have been let down in the past. The crisis in Mali was ended this year through the military intervention by France, which saw the radical Islamist groups pushed out and the subsequent deployment of the United Nations peacekeeping force, the Multi-dimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA), under the Security Council Resolution 2100, which were adopted on the 25<sup>th</sup> of April, 2013. This allowed space for the significant peace progress that followed between non-radical rebel groups and the Malian Government, culminating in the Ouagadougou Accords being signed on 18<sup>th</sup> of June. This peace agreement saw Tuareg rebels forming a joint delegation of the MLNA and the High Council for the Unity of Azawad (HCUA), an umbrella group for various Tuareg militias. The Arab Movement of Azawad (MAA) and the Movement of Patriotic Forces of Resistance (RSFF), a black rebel movement, have also signed the agreement.<sup>99</sup> Improving minority rights and closing the development gap between north and south should be the primary strategy for resolving the challenges presented in the conflict. The following recommendations modify previous approaches to decentralisation and the mechanisms by which these designs are institutionalised.

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<sup>96</sup> Claire Heyison, 2013, March 27, "There's Something About Mali," *Columbia Political Review*, <http://cpreview.org/2013/03/theres-something-about-mali/>.

<sup>97</sup> Ibid.

<sup>98</sup> BBC News, 2013, March 12, "Mali crisis: Key players," *BBC News website*, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-africa-17582909>.

<sup>99</sup> "Who's Who in Northern Mali," *African Defense*.

The MLNA and other groups seek the autonomy of the Azawad region, and there is in fact a strong case to make for this change. Geographically and culturally isolated from the rest of the country and sharing a harsh environment, it would make a great deal of sense for the regions of Gao, Timbuktu and Kidal to work through a localised body rather than reporting individually to Bamako. Having the power and means to manage their own issues is the first step to improving the stock of the northerners. However, a Tuareg-ruled autonomous Azawad as put forward by some rebel groups is impossible given that the Tuaregs do not form a majority in northern Mali. The solution is for the Malian Government to continue with its wider decentralisation process, but to make a specific focus of the northern region. The borders of regions, cercles and quarters stand as effective, as they were drawn in consultation and agreement with the local population to incorporate ethnicity, resources and so on.<sup>100</sup> Thus, we suggest retaining the structures of the Gao, Timbuktu and Kidal regional institutions with implied lower layers of governance, and to establish a Northern Federation of Mali for these groups to work through together. In this way, they can more effectively manage common problems unique to the region. We suggest a trial of partial autonomy, with the guarantee of a referendum in five years, supervised by the international community. The northern population would vote on full autonomy, reduced autonomy or the continuation of partial autonomy. This should represent a sufficient compromise for those calling for autonomy, and those who want the region to remain part of Mali, and has the potential to capitalise on the benefits of both. The combined Northern Federation would have equal representation with the remaining six regions in state decisions, but would operate specialised autonomy with decisions made in its own region, given its exceptional circumstances. This would include its own legal system: a regional court system with the possibility of appeal to the federal legal system, and an acknowledgement that persisted failure in its responsibility to protect its citizens would be met with international or national intervention. An international body of advisors should oversee joint delegations between Bamako government and northerners in creation of a constitution, which will be symbolic in recognising northerners of all walks of life. The existing governing bodies for health, education, transport, law enforcement and infrastructure should be retained for the role of advising central Northern Federation bodies, to be chaired by a collection of locally elected officials from each region. Any additional governing bodies may be created by legislation of the Northern Federation in the future. Further, the Northern Federation would be given the power to veto – decided upon by a two-thirds majority between Gao, Kidal and Timbuktu regions – any policy decisions made for the north by the central Bamako government.

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<sup>100</sup> Wing, "Briefing Mali."

As in the past, the Ouagadougou Accords, and likely any agreements to be made further, were negotiated by umbrella groups of countless militias. There is much divergence in ideology in the parties, which is representative of inter- and intra-tribal divisions in the Tuareg as a whole. The hierarchical Tuareg social structure is reflected in the peace agreements, with the elite minority Ifoghas comprising the majority of representation.<sup>101</sup> As such, regular Tuareg and other minority groups of northern Mali are in no way fully represented, and placating the leading rebel parties by allowing them to govern the northern communities would likely result in a microcosm of the current Mali: a largely centralised government without sufficiently diverse regional institutions representing all citizens. Instead, guarantees of political representation for all ethnic and sub-ethnic groups need to be made in order to combat divisions and enable all northern citizens to channel their political voice. This would involve affirmative action policies and reserved parliamentary seats for minorities and those not of traditional tribal elite. It is likely at this stage that the rebel groups and elite would enjoy the most popularity in local elections, but such a structure would allow movement towards equal representation.

The number of different rebel groups with different interests poses a significant risk of seeing elements breaking agreements and sparking resumed conflict as we have seen in the past. This demonstrates the need for a ratcheted approach to immediate and transparent implementation of any changes made in the north, under the supervision of the impartial international community. An agreement would be brokered under international advice and supervision between the Northern Federation and the government, on the commitment to swiftly transfer power to these regional areas in the long term. This should have a number of ratcheted clauses on either side, to give the northern communities the security they need to disarm, and to ensure the government delivers on its promises. Guarantees of immediate and sustained implementation are the only way to gain the trust needed to build positive peace in the region. If Mali finds itself in too unstable a position to do this, it must request assistance from the international community to empower the northern population. If progress is made in the wider communities of the north, it is likely that any support base for breakaway rebellions would be removed, and could subsequently be contained and isolated to avoid resurgence in conflict. The willingness of the international community to assist in peacebuilding in Mali is evident, and the financial support and large presence of UN peacekeepers and observers present a genuinely new opportunity to assist in accountability and new credibility to promises made. The past has shown that a large presence of southern Malian armed forces in the north will be resented and, as such, the

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<sup>101</sup> "Who's Who in Northern Mali," *African Defense*.

ongoing widespread presence of international peacekeepers will be needed to keep the region stable and ensure accountability for crime and violence. Once the transfers of power have been made to newly elected officials in the region, after a period of sustained stability, and when agreed on by a majority of northern officials down to the village levels, the peacekeepers should depart. Remaining observers should ensure accountability for adherence to agreements made, and appointed bodies, including but not limited to NGOs, should assist in consultation and advice in the economic and political spheres.

As well as political empowerment, the improvement of economic conditions in the north will reduce the need and incentive for northerners to engage in armed rebellion in the future. The United Nations should oversee essential development immediately, primarily improvements to health, education and transport facilities. Mending transport isolation alone would improve economic opportunity through trade. Moreover, an action plan should be formulated between the government and Northern Federation to deliver or request timely aid in response to drought in the northern regions. The agricultural sector, traditionally a strong source of livelihood, should receive the support it needs to revitalise and be resilient against environmental hardship. The Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations should receive sufficient funding to advise and assist this process. The restoration of security in the region would also allow the return of tourism, once a great feature of the economy of northern Mali.<sup>102</sup> A more general commitment is also needed to stimulate the sedentary economies. Corruption in Mali has been another persistent obstacle to alleviating Tuareg grievances. More effective implementation and improvement of minority rights as highlighted above would combat the failures seen in anti-corruption reforms and initiatives since 2000<sup>103</sup>. The presence of the international community in post-conflict Mali would also be invaluable in providing expertise and accountability for new anti-corruption measures.

The presence of Tuareg and northern discontent as a common factor in many of Mali's recent troubles suggests that resolving this discontent is central to facilitating lasting peace in the region. If northern grievances are left unchecked, it is difficult to see how Mali could avoid relapsing to its narrative of periodic violence. Improving minority rights and closing the inequality gap between north

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<sup>102</sup> Minority Rights Group International, "Mali: Tuareg profile and historical context."

<sup>103</sup> Anti-Corruption Resource Centre, 2008, March 7, "Overview of corruption and government's efforts against corruption in Mali," *U4 website*, <http://www.u4.no/publications/overview-of-corruption-and-government-s-efforts-against-corruption-in-mali/>.

and south is a simple strategy to resolve the issue. Unfortunately, poor implementation of decentralisation and a lack of measures to combat tribal elite dominance in political spheres have been persistent obstacles in past attempts. The modifications in approach and the mechanisms by which they would be institutionalised, as presented above, would demonstrate a long-standing commitment to empowering the northern population. Perhaps the Tuareg are too divided, their grievances too intractable, or the region too unstable to contain conflict, but without making long-sighted attempts at addressing the historic inequality in the north, we will never know whether this was a central piece of the puzzle of peace in Mali.

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# NONVIOLENCE: AN APPROACH TO CONFLICT

by Jess Longden

A man once wrote about ‘the power of the powerless’ being perhaps the most significant element in times of conflict, which one might say exposes the “powerlessness of the powerful”.<sup>104</sup> This man was Vaclav Havel, a Czech playwright who became the first President of the Czech Republic in 1993. His idea embodies that of an increasingly prominent approach to conflict known as nonviolence.<sup>105</sup> While nonviolence has a religious background, it has since been reshaped and reapplied through the ages, having been informed by passionate advocates of the idea who have demonstrated its true strength: Mahatma Gandhi, Martin Luther King, Jr., and Nelson Mandela, to name but a few. The aim of this essay is to discuss the various strengths and weaknesses of this approach, concluding that it is an exceedingly relevant and potent approach that has not received the credit it is due as a successful method of conflict resolution. Further, some of these strengths and weaknesses to be discussed will be explored through examining different issues and arguments that arise around this approach when implementing it in practice, such as: whether the type of regime is important in its success, whether the combination of both violent and nonviolent action is more successful than nonviolence alone (as many conflicts have previously contained elements of both), and the tension of means versus ends. In addition, this essay will explore the potential of this approach, using contemporary examples to suggest ways in which it could be practically implemented. It is recognised that nonviolence is much broader than is expressed in this essay; however, for the purposes of this argument, the focus of this discussion is centred on large-scale nonviolent campaigns conducted by a population against a state, either their own or a colonial power.

Nonviolence is very much an alternative approach to the conventional ideas on conflict: either that avoidance is best so as to not get involved, or that violence is the best option for combating an opponent and hence creating a cycle of violent action and reaction. Conversely, nonviolent methods do not advocate inaction nor seek to militarily combat the opponent, but rather attack the opponent indirectly by undermining its support base. It strips away as much power and legitimacy as necessary so the regime can no longer function effectively. Gene Sharp, a pragmatic nonviolent theorist, uses

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<sup>104</sup> Adam Roberts and Timothy Garton Ash, eds., 2009, *Civil Resistance and Power Politics: The Experience of Non-violent Action from Gandhi to the Present* (New York: Oxford University Press), 375.

<sup>105</sup> In this essay, nonviolence predominantly refers to the pragmatic school of thought as opposed to the pacifist tradition of nonviolence. See Johansen, 145-151.

the term “political jiu-jitsu”<sup>106</sup> to describe the use of this nonviolent action to effectively turn the opponent’s strength and force against them. For instance, instead of attacking factory personnel, machinery and materials to negatively influence the economy and production, a nonviolent approach would aim to directly influence the workers themselves and to recruit them to the cause, and then stage a nonviolent action, such as strikes or go-slows.<sup>107</sup> Furthermore, the nonviolent approach opens up more opportunity for a wider variety of actions, rather than simply military action; the repertoire of nonviolent action is limited only by the scope of activist creativity. By employing a multitude of different actions, different audiences are reached and persuaded, and multiple pillars of the opponent’s support are affected. For example, during the People Power movement in the Philippines, the Filipino population participated in a “general strike, a boycott of the state media, a massive run on state-controlled banks, [and] a boycott of crony businesses”, amongst other nonviolent activities. They consequently succeeded in ousting President Marcos soon after.<sup>108</sup> The uniqueness of this approach to conflict is found in its ability to provide a third way; it is neither action (i.e., war) nor inaction (i.e., pacifism). It allows for civilians to rely on something other than brute force, unlike their opponent. In other words, “It’s best to fight the enemy where you have an advantage – in this case, people power, unpredictability, adaptability, and creativity – rather than where he does.”<sup>109</sup>

The major strength of nonviolent campaigns lies in the mass participation of the population. In the words of Peter Ackerman and Jack DuVall, “The greatest misconception about conflict is that violence is always the ultimate form of power.”<sup>110</sup> However, true power is found in the consent of those it seeks to control: the civilian population. When this consent is withdrawn and reassigned to a more legitimate party, violence is not sufficient to sustain those ‘in power’ for long. Additionally, nonviolent campaigns have a tendency to “appeal to a much broader and diverse constituency than violent insurgencies.” Among others, some reasons for this may include: the primacy of lower-risk tactics, which allow activists to avoid more dangerous situations (for example, boycotts, stay-aways,

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<sup>106</sup> Thomas Weber, 2008, “Nonviolence Theory and Practice,” in *Encyclopedia of Violence, Peace, and Conflict*, edited by Lester Kurtz (Waltham: Academic Press), 1368.

<sup>107</sup> Erica Chenoweth, 2011, August 24, “Think Again: Nonviolent Resistance,” *Foreign Policy*.

<sup>108</sup> Erica Chenoweth and Maria Stephan, 2011, *Why Civil Resistance Works: The Strategic Logic of Nonviolent Conflict* (New York: Columbia University Press), 5.

<sup>109</sup> Chenoweth, “Think Again.”

<sup>110</sup> Peter Ackerman and Jack DuVall, 2000, *A Force More Powerful: A Century of Nonviolent Conflict* (New York: St. Martin's Press), 9.

and go-slows<sup>111</sup>), and the avoidance of moral dilemmas (nonviolent protestors are never expected to harm or kill anyone).<sup>112</sup> Hence, it is much easier with a nonviolent approach to conflict to recruit supporters while also swaying third-party observers. Specifically in regards to strikes and protests, a common social norm is also that there is strength and safety in numbers. Unlike when a violent approach is used, “such mass [nonviolent] gatherings break through the barrier of fear which, as Gandhi saw, is the essential bulwark of all non-democratic regimes.”<sup>113</sup> Therefore, the larger and more widespread the nonviolent action is, the higher the rate of participation becomes; courage breeds courage.<sup>114</sup> Furthermore, due to such a wide support base, this allows for more opportunities for action over space and time. This is imperative in undermining the regime’s ability to function as it overstretches its capacity to restrain events.<sup>115</sup> For example, during their occupation of Denmark, the Germans found it extremely difficult to contain and crush a strike before another one broke out elsewhere. In sum, the mass participation of a population who has withdrawn its consent from the rulers to rule, combined with a strategically planned higher quantity and variety of nonviolent actions over a longer period of time, results in the breakdown of a regime’s pillars of support, and hence wears thin their resilience and ability to function effectively.

One significant argument against the use of the nonviolent approach is that the type of regime that is being opposed is crucial in determining the success of the campaign. The example that is commonly used is: what if Gandhi had been fighting against the Nazi regime? The idea is that repressive regimes are less likely to willingly surrender any power and so nonviolence is ineffective against them. If this is true, then nonviolent reprisals would arguably be just as unsuccessful as violent ones. Additionally, this argument underscores the common misconception of pragmatic nonviolence; the aim is not to change the heart of the regime (although it would be preferable), but rather to undermine its support base.<sup>116</sup> If protestors can withstand the violent reprisals, it is possible for a nonviolent campaign to outlast a repressive regime as its power continuously wanes. Furthermore,

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<sup>111</sup> Stay-aways are events in which people vacate typically populated areas. Go-slows are events in which people move at half their normal pace, either at work or in public.

<sup>112</sup> Chenoweth, “Think Again.”

<sup>113</sup> Roberts and Garton Ash, *Civil Resistance and Power Politics*, 378.

<sup>114</sup> For the purposes of this essay, it is more appropriate to focus on the strengths and weaknesses of a nonviolent campaign once it is in motion. The study of how to mobilise the population from the outset is beyond the scope of this essay, but it would be an interesting addition to the knowledge of this approach.

<sup>115</sup> Ackerman and DuVall, *A Force More Powerful*, 499.

<sup>116</sup> David Cortright, 2008, *Peace: A History of Movements and Ideas* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), 227. Also, Chenoweth & Stephan.

Chenoweth and Stephan hold the stance that nonviolent campaigns are in fact more successful than violent campaigns under a repressive regime due to the much higher chance of backfiring.<sup>117</sup> This occurs when a reactionary, violent act is employed by the regime to crackdown on nonviolent activity, which results in “power shifts by increasing the internal solidarity of the resistance campaign, creating dissent and conflict among the opponent’s supporters, increasing external support for the resistance campaign, and decreasing external support for the opponent.”<sup>118</sup> Therefore, they argue that the cost of repressing a nonviolent campaign, as opposed to a violent one, is higher due to the more adverse consequences. On the other hand, this reveals a major problem: nonviolence is weakest in its beginnings because of its need for mass solidarity. A suggestion to improve this would be to partner it with mediation efforts. From the outset, it would provide an outlet for both parties to communicate their goals clearly and decisively. It would also create an extra line of communication for nonviolent activists to be more open about their agenda to the wider population and the international community. This is very important, as nonviolent protest relies on openness and publicity to not only gather larger and wider participation, but also external support. At a minimum, however, mediation could be used simply as a delaying tactic while the momentum of the movement accelerates and its support base swells through the spread of information and ideas.

Another strength of the nonviolence approach is its ability to end the cycle of violence that is so prevalent in the use of violent means. As Johansen observes, when violent means are employed, “it will often result in counter-violence and be the first twist in a violent spiral which can escalate out of control.”<sup>119</sup> The use of violence also increases the danger of fighting people rather than problems, for revenge rather than for goals.<sup>120</sup> However, one important point to make is that within conflict, there are often cases of both nonviolent and violent campaigns. Some argue that multiple actors with these competing methods in a conflict undermine the effects of the nonviolent action.<sup>121</sup> The presence of violence amidst a nonviolent campaign allows fear to remain; therefore, the movement may not achieve as large a participation base as it would have otherwise. Further, violence weakens the nonviolent ability to gain the support of third parties, both internally and externally. However, others

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<sup>117</sup> Erica Chenoweth and Maria Stephan, 2011, *Why Civil Resistance Works: The Strategic Logic of Nonviolent Conflict* (New York: Columbia University Press) 68-69.

<sup>118</sup> *Ibid*, 68.

<sup>119</sup> Jørgen Johansen, 2007, “Nonviolence: More than the absence of violence,” in *Handbook of Peace and Conflict Studies*, edited by Charles Webel and Johan Galtung (London: Routledge), 144.

<sup>120</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>121</sup> Ackerman and DuVall, *A Force More Powerful*, 495.

argue the opposite: that sometimes, the combination of violent and nonviolent action works to achieve the desired goal or outcome.<sup>122</sup> Through other actors, violent action can be added to the overall effects of nonviolent activity, and hence the opponent is both attacked (violently) and persuaded (nonviolently) from different levels, and his support pillars are undermined through multiple avenues. Overarching all of this is the key tension of the degree to which means influence ends. For instance, 'the ends justify the means' was a position from a "classic Jacobin-Bolshevik" view.<sup>123</sup> However, it cannot be denied that the means significantly influence the resulting ends. From the point of view of Gandhi, the man who effectively began the spread of the nonviolent approach to conflict, "The ends of human action are unpredictable, but the means employed are concrete and certain."<sup>124</sup> Therefore, the strength that nonviolent means have over violent methods lies in the resulting ability to end the reactionary cycle of violence. It creates a space for addressing real, core problems removed from feelings of revenge or hate that often accompany violence.

While ending the cycle of violence is an important strength of the nonviolent approach, talking about 'violence' in this way puts emphasis on a very narrow definition of violence. Furthermore, it only puts forth a discussion of the success of the approach in terms of achieving goals during a conflict. For example, the Philippines have had several instances of nonviolent resistance, yet the country continues to struggle with corruption and "democratic consolidation".<sup>125</sup> More recently, in 2011, Egypt's nonviolent protests saw the end of President Mubarak's dictatorship while the newly elected President Morsi saw the end to his rule less than two years later through more nonviolent protests. Moreover, Johansen argues that nonviolent revolutions tend to end up with more structural violence; in other words, "They have been more successful in removing a regime than in replacing it with something better."<sup>126</sup> This can be combated by partnering this approach with other conflict resolution approaches, specifically peacebuilding and reconciliation. Roberts and Ash state, "It is the combination of good strategic dramaturgy and a favourable structure of opportunity that produces the probability ... of significant change."<sup>127</sup> From this, it can be seen that, post-conflict, peace building and reconciliation provide this 'strategic dramaturgy', a form in which goals can be acted out while nonviolence provides the 'structure of opportunity'. To elaborate, the unique opportunity that

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<sup>122</sup> Roberts and Garton Ash, eds., *Civil Resistance and Power Politics*, 374.

<sup>123</sup> Ibid, 388.

<sup>124</sup> Cortright, *Peace*, 215.

<sup>125</sup> Chenoweth, "Think Again."

<sup>126</sup> Johansen, "Nonviolence," 157.

<sup>127</sup> Roberts and Garton Ash, *Civil Resistance and Power Politics*, 388.

nonviolence supplies here is that the problems associated with a violent takeover (such as a lack of political will, co-operation, representativeness, popular involvement, etc.) are often rendered irrelevant, if not reduced. Therefore, through this partnership with peacebuilding and reconciliation efforts, nonviolence encompasses a broader definition of violence and also brings post-conflict elements into the discussion.

Especially from the turn of the twenty-first century, large-scale nonviolence is becoming more and more prevalent as a way to approach conflict.<sup>128</sup> As Gene Sharp so aptly states, “Nonviolent action is possible, and is capable of wielding great power even against ruthless rulers and military regimes, because it attacks the most vulnerable characteristic of all hierarchical institutions and governments: dependence on the governed.”<sup>129</sup> Hence, nonviolent activity, as it is defined in this essay, is only relevant to situations in which the population of a state is significantly discontented, and therefore seeks to remove or influence those in power. Historical examples of the potential of this approach are numerous. The most well-known example of nonviolent protest, which led to the realisation of nonviolence as a valid and successful approach to conflict, is that of the movement in India in the 1930s, led by Gandhi. Through the advocating of refusal to purchase raj cloth and liquor and refusing to pay salt taxes, he was able to set India on a legitimate path to independence. Moreover, to make use of a more contemporary example, mass nonviolent resistance toppled the authoritarian regime in Tunisia in early 2011. The strength of the movement forced then President Zine el-Abidine Ben Ali to flee the country and surrender power to a new regime.<sup>130</sup> In regards to future implementations, Zimbabwe is a keen example that demonstrates the great potential of this nonviolent approach. As of July 31, Zimbabwe held elections for the presidency and parliament. The current, long standing President, Robert Mugabe, seeks to remain in power, and there is a high chance, through manipulation of the voters’ role and intimidation, that the elections will not be free and fair.<sup>131</sup> There is a prevalent “atmosphere of intolerance and restricted access, state media bias, and lack of confidence in institutions.”<sup>132</sup> It also appears that there is a high chance of an escalation of violence if the right catalyst is provided. Perhaps, as mentioned above, the population requires a third approach that is

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<sup>128</sup> Chenoweth and Stephan, *Why Civil Resistance Works*.

<sup>129</sup> Ackerman and DuVall, *A Force More Powerful*, 9. Emphasis added.

<sup>130</sup> Chenoweth and Stephan, *Why Civil Resistance Works*, 229.

<sup>131</sup> International Crisis Group, 2013, July 29, “Zimbabwe’s Elections: Mugabe’s Last Stand – Africa Briefing No. 95,” *International Crisis Group website*, <http://www.crisisgroup.org/en/regions/africa/southern-africa/zimbabwe/b095-zimbabwes-elections-mugabes-last-stand.aspx>.

<sup>132</sup> *Ibid.*

neither pacifism nor violence. This could possibly involve a boycott of state media, as voters would still have access to information via the internet, social media, mobile phones, and so on. It could also involve spatially varied nonviolent protests, and even strikes to undermine the regime economically. As stated previously, the variety of nonviolent options for action are limited only by the activists' scope of creativity, adapting the approach to their own context.

As stated, this essay has attempted to identify the strengths and weaknesses of an alternative approach to conflict resolution: nonviolence. It is successful on one hand due to its mass civilian participation and on the other through its unique approach in unbalancing the opponent by attacking their pillars of support: economic wealth, military power and political legitimacy, all of which are given at the consent of the civilians. An important observation is that rather than viewing the strengths and weaknesses of the nonviolence approach – or any approach in fact – in isolation, it is more beneficial and practical to weigh it in relative terms to other approaches, violent approaches in particular. Further, it would be even more beneficial to view it parallel to other approaches so as to more accurately identify effective combinations. Hence, nonviolence is enhanced by being partnered with approaches such as mediation, peacebuilding and reconciliation, being made more practically effective particularly post-conflict. As an alternative approach, nonviolence is not only a political tool; it also affects all other arenas: social, economic and cultural. While a political change (say, the removal of an authoritarian ruler from power) may occur within a week, it is important to remember that any social, economic or cultural change takes time. This means that nonviolence is not a means nor an end, but a process. Thus, nonviolence invites the world to redefine power; perhaps the 'power of the powerless' is a force more powerful.

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# KOFI ANNAN'S SIX-POINT PEACE PLAN FOR SYRIA: WHERE DID IT GO WRONG?

by Matthew Stevens

On February 23, 2011, Kofi Annan was appointed to the position of Special Envoy to Syria as part of collaboration between the United Nations and the Arab League. On March 16, 2011, Annan's six-point peace plan for Syria was unveiled. The plan was intended to resolve the civil war in Syria, and provide humanitarian aid to all affected. The plan called for a ceasefire starting on April 10, 2012; however, the Syrian Government, led by Bashar al-Assad, did not officially set the deadline to withdraw until April 12. Furthermore, the fighting did not officially cease until April 14, and even still, there remained skirmishes on the ground. The Houla Massacre on May 25, in which 108 people were killed, effectively ended the ceasefire. Kofi Annan resigned as peace envoy in the region on August 2.

Why, then, did Kofi Annan's peace plan fail? An in depth analysis of Kofi Annan's peace plan will be undertaken. The strengths and weaknesses of the peace plan will be assessed in order to determine what factors caused it to fail. In hindsight, what could have been done to change, tweak or adapt Kofi Annan's peace plan in order to make it more effective? Are there any imaginative ideas or practical ideas to make it work?

## The six-point peace plan

Kofi Annan's peace plan had six key contentions: firstly, any political changes would be Syrian-led; secondly, the UN would oversee a halt in armed violence; thirdly, there would be a two-hour pause every day in which humanitarian assistance would be provided by UN monitors; fourthly, arbitrarily detained prisoners would be released as quickly as possible; fifthly, journalists would be given free rein, and be subject to a non-discriminatory visa process; and finally, freedom of association and the right to protest must be respected. Even though it collapsed, the plan has received a deal of praise.<sup>133,134</sup> Annan was sent in to negotiate a resolution to the conflict, and it is important to note that, at the time, the scale of the civil war was not nearly as intense as it is today. Annan tried to give

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<sup>133</sup> Richard Gowan, 2013, "Kofi Annan, Syria and the Uses of Uncertainty in Mediation," *Stability: International Journal of Security and Development* 2 (1): 8, <http://dx.doi.org/10.5334/sta.ax>.

<sup>134</sup> James Traub, 2012, May 25, "Enough Talking, Kofi," *Foreign Policy*, [http://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2012/05/25/enough\\_talking\\_kofi](http://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2012/05/25/enough_talking_kofi).

the Syrian Government and the rebel forces a clear and amicable end to the situation, and give regional powers like the US and Russia a clear understanding of what was to follow. This was done through the wording of the peace plan. Tensions between Russia and the west were cooled by proposing ideas that the entire UN Security Council could agree upon. Tensions within Syria were similarly dealt with, with Annan proposing that a 'Syrian-led' operation would conduct the process. This effectively meant that Assad could remain in power, whilst still exacting change upon the region, a successful mediation strategy.

Kofi Annan's six-point peace plan has drawn several criticisms, however. Miller (2012) argues that Kofi Annan gave too much room for Bashar al-Assad to consolidate his power, gather his strength and in turn prolong the war.<sup>135</sup> Others argue that Annan should have recognised that the plan had failed much earlier, rather than trying to persevere with diplomacy.<sup>136</sup> Greig argues that, due to the number of parties involved,<sup>137</sup> the lack of cohesiveness within the rebel forces and the geopolitical location,<sup>138</sup> there was really no hope of success.

### **Why did mediation fail?**

Where exactly did it go wrong? Perhaps it is important to look at the time frame in which it was established. Annan presented his peace plan just three weeks after he was appointed to the position of envoy in the area. This is a very short time frame, and reflects a quick fix solution, rather than a long term one. Annan's aim was to calm down the situation in the area so that talks could begin, but without a foreseeable end to the conflict and resolution for all parties involved, it seems inevitable that Annan would have failed. Gowan argues that Annan's initial plan was to provide some clarity in the region<sup>139</sup> – as to the threats of invasion, for example – in order to establish trust inside and outside the Syrian region.

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<sup>135</sup> Aaron Miller, 2012, March 29, "Will Annan Save Assad?" *The New York Times*.

<sup>136</sup> Traub, "Enough Talking."

<sup>137</sup> J Michael Greig, 2013, "Intractable Syria? Insights from the Scholarly Literature on the Failure of Mediation," *Penn State Journal of Law & International Affairs* 2 (1): 48.

<sup>138</sup> *Ibid*, 54.

<sup>139</sup> Richard Gowan, 2013, "Kofi Annan, Syria and the Uses of Uncertainty in Mediation," *Stability: International Journal of Security and Development* 2 (1): 8, <http://dx.doi.org/10.5334/sta.ax>.

The peace plan faced a number of problems with regards to regional powers. One of the problems facing Annan was the level of confusion and uncertainty in the region. Russia and Iran believed a western invasion was imminent, and the al-Assad Government wasn't sure whether the Arab and western countries surrounding it would act. The Syrian Government openly and blatantly flouted the ceasefire agreement, which incurred no penalty from the UN. Ultimately, Kofi Annan's intention was to clarify the situation so there was no confusion,<sup>140</sup> but a better solution would have been to capitalise on the confusion. Al-Assad would have been less likely to flout the rules if he was unsure of what the consequences were and who his allies were. By doing so, Annan allowed the Syrian Government to consolidate its leadership, by seeing acts of defiance go unpunished, and by seeing who would continue to support it.

Another problem was the level of involvement of regional powers. As Greig and Diehl point out,<sup>141</sup> more parties involved in the conflict only creates more barriers to overcome. By increasing the number of countries involved in the war, more becomes at stake. With the US, Britain, Saudi Arabia and Qatar providing weapons to the rebels, and Russia and Iran aiding the government, there was a multitude of areas the plan had to tackle before it could be successful. Kofi Annan successfully appeased most groups initially, by using ambiguous wording in his plan. However, no serious attempt was made to stop weapons being shipped into the country from any side, meaning both sides were still armed and the ceasefire was bound to implode. A more serious effort should have been made to embargo weapon shipments into the area, with all countries cooperating; this is easier said than done, however.

Furthermore, there were several rebel groups, all with different interests in the war, and trying to come up with a solution to appease everybody proved too difficult. The Free Syrian Army is made up of local militia groups that do not coordinate with one another, making negotiation difficult.<sup>142</sup> With so many different groups with competing interests in the mix, coming up with a solution to please everybody was too difficult. Concessions made to one side tended to anger another.

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<sup>140</sup> Miller, "Will Annan Save Assad?"

<sup>141</sup> J Michael Greig and Paul Diehl, 2012, *International Mediation*, Polity.

<sup>142</sup> Rania Abouzeid, 2012, September 18, "Syria's Secular and Islamist Rebels: Who are the Saudis and the Qataris Arming?" *Time Magazine*, <http://world.time.com/2012/09/18/syrias-secular-and-islamist-rebels-who-are-the-saudis-and-the-qataris-arming/>.

The only way to resolve this would have been to somehow unify the competing groups under one banner and make concessions to the group as a whole.

Another problem that faced Annan was the size of the peace-keeping force. Somewhere between 200 and 300 UN peacekeeping monitors were deployed into the area.<sup>143</sup> Experts argue that somewhere between 3000 and 5000 would have been more sufficient.<sup>144</sup> The number of troops was largely ineffective in terms of both size and capacity. Troops were only allowed to try to mediate, which also presented difficulties with language. Furthermore, the UN monitors were largely powerless to stop minor skirmishes. In relation to point three in the peace plan, UN monitors were unable to effectively deliver assistance either in aid or in stopping the conflict. When assistance was required, it was often not delivered, either because conditions were unsafe due to continued fighting, or just lack of peacekeepers. This further highlights that the efforts made by all sides in resolving the conflict were not taken seriously enough.

### **What could have been done to make the peace plan more effective?**

By and large, Kofi Annan's plan for Syria was adequate, but there were too many factors affecting the outcome. Trying to appease both the government and the rebel forces within Syria, as well as the regional governments that had a stake in the result, proved too difficult. No side was willing to concede ground before the other, which led to a stalemate in negotiations. Additionally, the lack of effort from all sides to stick to the plan meant that failure was inevitable. If a more cohesive effort had taken place, with all sides being held accountable for breaking their stipulations, it is hard to see the ceasefire ending as quickly as it did. A much stronger peacekeeping force would have gone a long way to ensuring that safety and humanitarian aid could be provided. Ultimately, though, Kofi Annan himself stated that "without serious, purposeful and united international pressure, including from the powers of the region, it is impossible for me, or anyone, to compel the Syrian government in the first place, and also the opposition, to take the steps necessary to begin a political process."<sup>145</sup>

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<sup>143</sup> United Nations, "United Nations Supervision Mission in Syria: Facts and Figures," *United Nations website*, accessed August 2, 2013, <http://www.un.org/en/peacekeeping/missions/unsmis/facts.shtml>.

<sup>144</sup> 2012, "Mission impossible: why Kofi Annan's peace plan for Syria failed," *Rear Vision*, produced by ABC, <http://www.abc.net.au/radionational/programs/rearvision/kofi-annan27s-peace-plan/4242708>.

<sup>145</sup> Rick Gladstone, 2012, August 2, "Resigning as Envoy to Syria, Annan Casts Wide Blame," *The New York Times*, <http://www.nytimes.com/2012/08/03/world/middleeast/annan-resigns-as-syria-peace-envoy.html>.

Gowan argues that instead of trying to clear up the issues on all sides, Kofi Annan should have tried to capitalise on the confusion.<sup>146</sup> If al-Assad was uncertain of who his friends and enemies were and whether NATO or another armed force would intervene, he would have been more likely to cooperate with negotiations and mediation. Instead, by demonstrating to al-Assad that there would be no punishment for breaking the ceasefire, and that no other country would intervene, al-Assad was essentially able to consolidate his position of power within the region and further scoff at demands. Had Kofi Annan sat everyone down for crisis talks prior to the peace plan, the outcome may have been different.

Kofi Annan's peace plan could have been improved in some areas. A longer term solution should have been tabled, one aimed at ending the conflict rather than just implementing an immediate ceasefire. Annan's plan was worded so that al-Assad could remain in power if he chose. Pressure could have been put on al-Assad to step down, but this would not have been received well by the government. Al-Assad could have been asked to name a successor, but this would not have been satisfactory for the rebels. Perhaps a situation wherein al-Assad had stepped down but was allowed to remain involved in government, or wherein a new panel-type government was chosen to see Syria out until democratic elections could take place would have been better. This solution, however, implies cooperation between the government and rebels, and those on either side might have seen that as a sign of treason. It was important for Annan to allow Syria to lead the process, but a more strict oversight was needed.

An avenue for improvement in the case of the rebel forces could be an attempt at unifying them. With so many different groups with different goals present, it was always going to be difficult to get them to agree on anything, and all it took was for one group not complying with the ceasefire for the whole process to be ruined. Before establishing guidelines, Annan could have made a rigorous effort to unify the rebel groups, or at least ask them to appoint a spokesperson whom could be dealt with. By going down this avenue, accountability is placed on the spokesperson, and in turn the separate factions, and if any fall out of line, they could be punished separately from the collective 'rebel' group.

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<sup>146</sup> Gowan, "The Uses of Uncertainty in Mediation."

Another area of improvement for Annan could have been dealing out stricter penalties for failing to comply. As it stood, no side was accountable for breaching the ceasefire agreement, with both sides laying the blame on the other. Perhaps the threat of NATO invasion or rigorous economic or humanitarian sanctions may have caused both sides to think twice about starting up conflict again.

Furthermore, sanctions could have been placed on countries not complying with armament agreements. Countries like the US, Russia, Iran, Saudi Arabia and Qatar all continued to provide weaponry assistance after the ceasefire had begun. Trying to place sanctions on these countries would be extremely difficult due to their vast wealth and power. However, threatening to revoke permanent member status on the UN Security Council would be a very serious threat, one that the US and Russia would be likely to heed. There is, of course, always the chance that these countries would deny involvement, which would make the task much harder. Therefore, trying to sanction third parties would have proven too difficult to manage, and more effort would be better spent within the country itself.

It is always prudent to set dates and deadlines for conflict resolution where necessary. In this case, setting a ceasefire date of April 10<sup>th</sup> was satisfactory initially, but al-Assad did not comply until April 14<sup>th</sup>. This kind of delay should have been deemed unacceptable, and once again sanctions should have been placed on the government for not complying. By placing sanctions or an embargo of some sort, the Syrian Government, and indeed the rest of the world, would have seen that the UN was serious. As it stood, al-Assad set his own deadline and went unpunished, and that weakness was preyed on by everyone involved, not just the government.

Furthermore, more troops should have been deployed to gain control of the area. The number of troops sent in was vastly insufficient; the warring parties had an easy time overcoming them. Sending in more troops would have sent out a clearer message. A greater number of troops would have been able to access more of the region, and more aid would have equalled less deaths, which in turn means less fuel being added to the conflict. Most acts of violence in the region now are just retaliations to other acts of violence. By providing more troops not only to force the groups to lay down their weapons, but also to care for the injured, it logically follows that tensions would have cooled.

## Concluding comments

This essay has looked at some of the strengths and failings of the peace plan, and outlined ways in which it could have been improved. The contention is that, while the peace plan was largely unsuccessful in stopping the ceasefire, it had the foundations of success, just not the backing from all sides. Without the will to resolve the conflict, failure was inevitable. There were some problems with it, however. Firstly, the peace plan needed an actual goal to end the war, not to just be used as a means for negotiation to take place. Secondly, the plan needed the cooperation of all parties involved, both within Syria and outside it. Thirdly, the peace plan needed more serious backing from the worldwide community and the UN. Finally, some examples of strategic improvement have been provided. In the future, the Syrian conflict will be resolved once both sides have amassed enough casualties, or the regional powers decide they have no interest in controlling Syria. Until such a time, there are too many players with too many interests at stake, and solving the problem looks – as Lakhdar Brahimi, Kofi Annan’s successor as peace envoy in Syria, suggests – “nearly impossible”.<sup>147</sup>

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<sup>147</sup> Richard Spencer, 2012, September 3, “UN envoy to Syria, Lakhdar Brahimi, says job 'nearly impossible',” *The Telegraph*, <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/middleeast/syria/9518427/UN-envoy-to-Syria-Lakhdar-Brahimi-says-job-nearly-impossible.html>.

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# UN PEACEKEEPING

by Catherine Wood

Conflict management has become increasingly extensive and includes many elements conducted by the United Nations (UN) in conjunction with other actors.<sup>148</sup> This essay will focus on UN peacekeeping operations authorised by the Security Council, and will identify strengths and limitations with possible implementations of future peacekeeping operations. Peacekeeping, when accompanied with other forms of conflict management, can be very effective in creating an environment for peace to prevail and reducing the probability of a relapse into violent conflict.

The United Nations charter, signed in 1945, appointed central responsibility to the United Nations Security Council in maintaining international peace and security.<sup>149</sup> In carrying out this role, the Security Council established UN peacekeeping operations as a branch of conflict management. In 1948, the first UN peacekeeping mission was sent to report on the Arab-Israeli ceasefire.<sup>150</sup> At this time and throughout the Cold War years, the key objectives of peacekeeping were to maintain ceasefires and create necessary stability for lasting peace.<sup>151</sup> This included three elements: 'observation, monitoring and reporting', 'supervision of ceasefire and support to verification mechanisms' and 'interposition as buffer and confidence-building measure'.<sup>152</sup> Following the end of the Cold War, the changing international context generated a new 'multi-dimensional' form of peacekeeping.<sup>153</sup> With interstate conflict declining after the Cold War, the majority of wars worldwide were and still remain internal armed conflicts. Multidimensional peacekeeping operations are deployed in post-civil war states and include military, civilian and police forces.<sup>154</sup> The role of peacekeepers has altered in recent decades, with additional focus placed on helping to shape the political structure, disarming ex-combatants and returning refugees.<sup>155</sup> It is important to note that peacekeeping operations are deployed with consent from the state, and that military force is used

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<sup>148</sup> United Nations, 2008, "United Nations Peacekeeping Operations: Principles and Guidelines," 8.

<sup>149</sup> Ibid, 13.

<sup>150</sup> Bertrand Badie, Dirk Berg-Schlosser, and Leonardo Morlino, 2011, "Peacekeeping," in *International Encyclopedia of Political Science* (SAGE Publications), 4.

<sup>151</sup> United Nations, "Peacekeeping Operations: Principles and Guidelines," 21.

<sup>152</sup> Ibid.

<sup>153</sup> Ibid.

<sup>154</sup> Ibid, 22.

<sup>155</sup> United Nations, 2012, "Background Note to UN Peacekeeping."

only with authorisation or in the case of self-defence.<sup>156</sup> The military force of UN-led peacekeeping operations is made up of personnel from UN member states.<sup>157</sup> Although peacekeeping has expanded its objectives since 1945, three principles remain: consent of the parties, impartiality and non-use of force except with consent.<sup>158</sup>

UN peacekeeping operations involved more than 121,000 personnel in 17 missions during 2012, nine times the size of operations in 1999.<sup>159</sup> The shift from traditional peacekeeping to multidimensional peacekeeping has become more broad and complex, which in turn has resulted in more controversy over whether peacekeeping missions should be deployed. Pro-peacekeeping arguments maintain that these operations successfully help transform weak post-conflict societies into stronger governed states,<sup>160</sup> whilst others argue that peacekeeping forces make little difference or cause more harm, attempting to create peace by undermining the “fragile status quo that allowed the peacekeepers to engage with the conflict”<sup>161</sup> in the first place. Looking at the former argument, it can be seen that peacekeeping missions, including the United Nations Missions in Sierra Leone (UNAMSIL)<sup>162</sup>, Mozambique (ONUMOZ)<sup>163</sup> and Cambodia (UNTAC),<sup>164</sup> amongst others, have seen positive results. Multidimensional peacekeeping missions have the ability to exercise a high level of international legitimacy due to authorisation from the UN Security Council.<sup>165</sup> This gives peacekeepers necessary authority over the parties involved. Additionally, UN peacekeeping is more cost-effective in comparison to other interventions, with a budget of US \$7.84 billion in the 2011/12 financial year, amounting to less than 0.5 percent of global military consumption.<sup>166</sup> It is important to note that the United Nations explicitly states that peacekeeping is not the only solution when it comes to conflict management; it “supports a peace process, it is not a substitute for one.”<sup>167</sup> Given the differing natures

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<sup>156</sup> Kyle Beardsley, 2011, “Peacekeeping and the Contagion of Armed Conflict,” *The Journal of Politics* 73 (4): 1052.

<sup>157</sup> United Nations, “Background Note.”

<sup>158</sup> United Nations, “Peacekeeping Operations: Principles and Guidelines,” 31.

<sup>159</sup> Ibid.

<sup>160</sup> Han Dorussen and Theodora-Ismene Gizelis, 2013, “Into the Lion's Den: Local Responses to UN Peacekeeping,” *Journal of Peace Research* 50 (6): 16.

<sup>161</sup> Ibid.

<sup>162</sup> Andrea Ruggeri, Theodora-Ismene Gizelis, and Han Dorussen, 2012, “Managing Mistrust: An Analysis of Cooperation with UN Peacekeeping in Africa,” *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 57 (3): 388.

<sup>163</sup> Richard Syngé, 1997, *Mozambique: UN Peacekeeping in Action, 1992-94* (US Institute of Peace Press), 4.

<sup>164</sup> Bertrand Badie, Dirk Berg-Schlosser, and Leonardo Morlino, “Peacekeeping,” 8.

<sup>165</sup> United Nations, “Peacekeeping Operations: Principles and Guidelines,” 24.

<sup>166</sup> United Nations, “Background Note.”

<sup>167</sup> Ibid.

and motivating forces behind civil wars, each peacekeeping mission has different objectives. In some cases limited intervention is appropriate, and in others a more comprehensive mission is deployed, including infrastructure development, monitoring elections and humanitarian assistance.<sup>168</sup> It is therefore difficult to measure the overall success of UN peacekeeping operations. In a study published in 2004, Virginia Fortna found that 42 percent of civil wars fell back into conflict when no peacekeeping operations were deployed, in comparison to 39 percent with peacekeeping.<sup>169</sup> Such statistics hardly support the success of peacekeeping, but there are many variables that drastically increase the likelihood of civil wars relapsing regardless of help from the international community. For example, it is much harder to achieve sustainable peace when the civil war ends in a stalemate rather than a military defeat.<sup>170</sup> In these scenarios, neither side is completely satisfied with the outcome, and both are capable of returning to violent conflict. Taking the cases in which there was no clear military winner, Fortna shows that peacekeeping reduces the chance of a relapse into conflict, with two-thirds maintaining peace in comparison to half without peacekeepers.<sup>171</sup> Additionally, UN peacekeepers are usually only deployed into conflicts that end in a stalemate, with the only exceptions being Haiti and Rwanda.<sup>172</sup> Fortna makes the point that, if peacekeepers were only deployed into post-conflict situations in which there is a 'political will' for peace in order to avoid failures, peacekeeping could be made irrelevant.<sup>173</sup>

The major challenges facing peacekeeping operations are reflected in the durability of military conflicts such as those in Afghanistan, Somalia, Chad, Sudan and the Democratic Republic of Congo.<sup>174</sup> Wright and Greig state that often there is a problem with the durability of the peacekeeping mission. A mission is more likely to continue if costs are seen as justified, peacekeeping is seen to be beneficial and there is potential for peaceful ends in the near future.<sup>175</sup> The above examples of peacekeeping 'failures' are those in which violent conflict is recurring, and in many instances the cost of

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<sup>168</sup> Amanda Murdie and David Davis, 2010, "Problematic Potential: The Human Rights Consequences of Peacekeeping Interventions in Civil Wars," *Human Rights Quarterly* 32 (1): 53.

<sup>169</sup> Virginia Fortna, 2004, "Does Peacekeeping Keep Peace? International Intervention and the Duration of Peace After Civil War," *International Studies Quarterly* 48 (2): 271.

<sup>170</sup> *Ibid.*, 273.

<sup>171</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>172</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>173</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>174</sup> Fred Tanner, 2010, "Addressing the Perils of Peace Operations: Toward a Global Peacekeeping System," *Global Governance: A Review of Multilateralism and International Organizations* 16 (2): 209.

<sup>175</sup> Thorin M Wright and J Michael Greig, 2012, "Staying the Course: Assessing the Durability of Peacekeeping Operations," *Conflict Management and Peace Science* 29 (2): 133.

peacekeeping missions is seen as too high. Intense conflict creates risks for peacekeeping personnel as well as an uncertainty over whether a UN mission will be able to make a difference, often leading to early termination.<sup>176</sup> In the circumstances in which peacekeeping operations have the ability to help control conflict, it is unlikely to create sustainable peace without the assistance of many other actors. The deployment of peacebuilding personnel must follow in order to help create a politically and socially stable environment. Peacekeepers often lack the funds to support the necessary programs and the technical capabilities to enforce them.<sup>177</sup> Additionally, peacekeepers are not usually mandated to support socio-economic recovery and development in post-conflict societies.<sup>178</sup>

There are certainly clear strengths and limitations with peacekeeping operations. However, instead of trying to measure how successful UN peacekeeping missions have been over the last 60 years based on whether states have relapsed into conflict, Dorussen and Gizelis argue that we should consider the response of local actors. They argue that this approach is better at evaluating whether peacekeeping operations should continue to be deployed, as it “fits the realistic assumption that some policies will work and other are bound to fail”.<sup>179</sup> They found both governments and rebel groups supported UN peacekeepers’ attempts to strengthen authority, but there was a clear lack of cooperation when it came to handling human rights abuses.<sup>180</sup> In weighing up the relative success of peacekeeping, it is important to acknowledge that peacekeepers are not usually deployed into situations in which violent conflict has ended conclusively.<sup>181</sup> With this in mind, peacekeeping operations do not always lead to the desired outcome of sustainable peace, but they often provide the environment for a state to obtain peace.

As mentioned earlier, with the emergence of multidimensional peacekeeping, the tasks of UN peacekeepers have expanded in order to create a stronger foundation for lasting peace. The difference between peacekeeping, peacemaking, peacebuilding and peace enforcement has become somewhat unclear. Peacekeepers today are often involved in the process of peacemaking and the early stages of peacebuilding.<sup>182</sup> To clarify, in principle, *peacemaking* involves diplomatic action in order to negotiate

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<sup>176</sup> Ibid, 134.

<sup>177</sup> United Nations, “Peacekeeping Operations: Principles and Guidelines,” 26.

<sup>178</sup> Ibid.

<sup>179</sup> Dorussen and Gizelis, “Into the Lion’s Den,” 16.

<sup>180</sup> Ibid.

<sup>181</sup> Fortna, “Does Peacekeeping Keep Peace?,” 288.

<sup>182</sup> United Nations, “Peacekeeping Operations: Principles and Guidelines,” 19.

some form of agreement during a conflict, *peacebuilding* involves the strengthening of 'national capacities' in order to prevent conflict relapse and *peace enforcement* involves military force (with authorisation of the Security Council) at a strategic level.<sup>183</sup> Peacekeeping in and of itself has limitations due to lack of funds and expertise, but when partnered with the other peace operations above, it can become a more complete form of conflict management. Additionally, in order to make conflict management more effective, UN peacekeeping forces should further strengthen relationships with regional organisations as well as the African Union and European Union. With cooperation, the UN and regional agencies can coordinate their activities, demonstrate their own capacities and share the tasks that are required to achieve peace.<sup>184</sup> For example, conflict is known to cross borders if there is a civil war in a neighbouring state, so by collaborating with regional bodies, UN peacekeepers can prevent conflict from spreading by securing borders and controlling the movement of arms.<sup>185</sup> Refugee flows are a major ramification of civil war; peacekeeping forces can work together with humanitarian agencies and non-government organisations to assist in the protection of civilians and resettle internally displaced persons.<sup>186</sup> Another important aspect of conflict management, particularly in its early stages, is mediation; peacekeepers are increasingly involved in mediation and communication between parties in order to come to faster resolutions.<sup>187</sup> The process of mediation prompts an exchange of information that otherwise may not occur, and can lead to a decline in violence.<sup>188</sup> Finally, peacekeeping often needs to be coupled with humanitarian aid. Peacekeepers may be able to help with the provision of aid distribution but are often limited in terms of funding. It is important for the aid to be sent as directly as possible to civilians so that it does not get diverted to the corrupt elite.

There are currently fifteen UN peacekeeping missions led by the Department of Peacekeeping Operations.<sup>189</sup> By examining current stages of conflict worldwide, there could be potential for peacekeeping forces to be deployed in Libya and Syria. Two years on from the UN-mandated NATO operation into Libya and the fall of Gaddafi, violent conflict still remains.<sup>190</sup> Revenge killings have

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<sup>183</sup> Ibid, 18.

<sup>184</sup> Hikaru Yamashita, 2012, "Peacekeeping cooperation between the United Nations and regional organisations," *Review of International Studies* 38 (1): 170.

<sup>185</sup> Beardsley, "Contagion of Armed Conflict," 1053.

<sup>186</sup> Ibid, 1055.

<sup>187</sup> Murdie and Davis, "Problematic Potential," 54.

<sup>188</sup> Ibid.

<sup>189</sup> United Nations, "Current peacekeeping operations," *United Nations website*, August 11, 2013, <http://www.un.org/en/peacekeeping/operations/current.shtml>.

<sup>190</sup> Fred Abrahams, 2013, March 25, "Why have we forgotten about Libya?" *CNN website*, <http://globalpublicsquare.blogs.cnn.com/2013/03/25/why-have-we-forgotten-about-libya/>.

occurred, particularly targeting people in the town of Tawergha, where many men had previously joined Gaddafi.<sup>191</sup> The attacks are widespread and systematic, taking the form of crimes against humanity. The United Nations, under the responsibility to protect doctrine, should step in when the government is unable or unwilling to protect its own citizens.<sup>192</sup> If instability and attacks continue, there could be potential for a stabilisation peacekeeping force to be deployed in order to prevent escalation of violence. Secondly, the ongoing civil war in Syria certainly warrants the help of the international community. The Department of Peacekeeping Operations deployed 382 observers into Syria in April 2012. However, with ceasefire efforts failing, these peacekeepers were withdrawn in August.<sup>193</sup> As a result of entrenched violence and the veto power of Russia and China, the UN has limited influence. At this point in time, alternative measures – including diplomatic pressure, humanitarian aid and support for refugees in neighbouring states – are appropriate. Nevertheless, following the eventual end of the war, a stabilising peacekeeping force will likely be required. It could be a difficult mission, considering there are multiple military groups that are not united in opposition.<sup>194</sup> This operation, if it takes off, will most probably have a high level of risk due to expected continual violence. Some states may not be willing to contribute military troops to such an operation. However, similar obstacles have been seen in peacekeeping operations in the Democratic Republic of Congo, going well beyond traditional peacekeeping mandates.<sup>195</sup>

In conclusion, UN peacekeeping operations can be an effective element of conflict management. Due to being authorised by the UN Security Council, these operations have a high level of international legitimacy and are also more cost effective than other interventions. Often, peacekeepers are deployed into states coming out of violent civil war and tend not to result in military victory, but rather end in stalemate. For this reason, states sometimes relapse into violent conflict following peacekeeping missions, but they are more likely to maintain lasting peace than they would without a peacekeeping force present. There are certainly limitations when it comes to durability, as some missions are deemed too costly and high-risk. In order for peacekeeping to result in the best possible outcome, it must be partnered with other peace operations such as peacebuilding and

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<sup>191</sup> Ibid.

<sup>192</sup> United Nations, 2013, "The Responsibility to Protect," *United Nations website*, August 11, 2013, <http://www.un.org/en/preventgenocide/adviser/responsibility.shtml>.

<sup>193</sup> Kennan Hedrick, 2013, June 20, "Syria: Looking Ahead To A U.N. Peacekeeping Operation," *The Stimson Center website*, August 11, 2013, <http://www.stimson.org/spotlight/syria-looking-ahead-to-a-un-peacekeeping-operation/>.

<sup>194</sup> Ibid.

<sup>195</sup> Ibid.

peacemaking, as peacekeeping operations often do not have the funding nor the expertise to carry out programs such as humanitarian assistance and development. Strengthening the relationship between UN peacekeeping operations and regional organisation will further increase the chance of a successful transition into peace. Mediation and communication is another element that can help reduce an escalation of violence. When looking at future peacekeeping missions, it is difficult to foresee how conflicts will play out and whether the role of peacekeeping will be effective. However, if violence continues to escalate in Libya, there may be potential for a mission to be deployed in order to prevent further violence. Syria, on the other hand, will almost certainly require international support following the end of its civil war. Peacekeeping has the capacity to help frame a political and social environment in order for peace to prevail; Syria, however, may display a high level of risk due to expected intermittent violence.

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# THE ROLE OF MEDIATION IN CONFLICT RESOLUTION

by Patrick Wundke

“Mediation is a non-coercive intervention by a third party in a dispute between two or more political entities for the stated purpose of effecting a settlement of the dispute”.<sup>196</sup> According to Beber,<sup>197</sup> it is distinct from arbitration in that it has no set end goal; being essentially a political process, it requires the active participation of disputants and the mediator. Touval and Zartman<sup>198</sup> add that mediation is an active negotiation wherein a third party helps the other parties find a solution that they could not find by themselves. For the purposes of conflict management, mediation is by most accounts by far the most common form of peaceful, third party intervention in international conflicts.<sup>199</sup>

Mediation has a lot of strengths as an approach to conflict management in the developing world. Fundamentally peaceful and unbiased, it steers clear of insinuation of external intervention. By not involving military force, it is also a relatively cheap and therefore accessible approach, and through cumulative mediation, uncertainties between parties are decreased while there is a general increase in the transfer of information, leading to a much greater likelihood of a peaceful outcome.

However, there are a number of potential weaknesses or vulnerabilities to the approach that regularly result in a lack of resolution. The complexity of conflict situations and an inherent overreliance on few personalities allow scope for many potential mediation failures. Obstacles and dilemmas regarding who to include and how simply leaves the process very open to being affected by critical variables. Finally, the best time to attempt to mediate a conflict to minimise the long-term impact remains a contested issue, with there being no hard and fast rules nor clear indicators as to the best timing for success.

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<sup>196</sup> Bernd Beber, 2012, “International Mediation, Selection Effects, and the Question of Bias,” *Conflict Management and Peace Science* 29 (4): 400.

<sup>197</sup> Ibid.

<sup>198</sup> In: Tobias Böhmelt, 2013, “Failing to succeed? The cumulative impact of international mediation revisited.” *Conflict Management and Peace Science* 30 (3): 199.

<sup>199</sup> Jacob Bercovitch and Scott Sigmund Gartner, 2008, “New approaches, methods and findings in the study of mediation,” in *International Conflict Mediation: New Approaches and Findings*, edited by Jacob Bercovitch and Scott Sigmund Gartner (New York: Routledge), 5.

Mediation, however, does not exist in isolation as a conflict management approach; its positive effects are almost invariably associated with complementary approaches. Ways in which mediation can be combined or developed with other approaches to make it more effective include the sharing of information from peacekeeping observation and fact-finding missions, and the use of mediation at a local level, contributing to peacekeeping and reconciliation approaches. The development of *hybrid peacemaking* approaches that integrate mediation tend to reinforce the strengths of mediation as a tool.

Finally, in a short case study, this essay discusses ideas for the potential implementation of mediation to help resolve the current ongoing conflict in Mali. Collectively, the arguments presented in this paper seek to critically examine the role and potential roles of mediation in managing conflict in the developing world.

## **Strengths**

Depending on how it is applied, mediation is potentially a very valuable approach to conflict management in the developing world. Due to its strength as a conflict resolution tool, it has proven to be a crucial and effective instrument for the non-violent resolution of many interstate and intrastate disputes.<sup>200</sup>

Peaceful and unbiased in approach, mediation between conflicting parties is valuable in being unobtrusive, clearly distancing itself from the insinuation of intervention or anything that may further inflame tensions. Mediators can use a number of tactics, but as a conflict-resolution approach, mediation is unique in that it doesn't apply force or use coercion, in the form of rewards or threats, to create conditions necessary for agreement or to guarantee the settlement of the conflict.<sup>201</sup> Not trying to force a solution on the disputants and involving parties as partners in a mutual exploration of incentives increases the chance of success and leads to a greater sense of ownership and increased likelihood that they will accept responsibility for necessary changes.<sup>202</sup>

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<sup>200</sup> Böhmelt, "Failing to succeed," 199.

<sup>201</sup> Beber, "Question of Bias," 400.

<sup>202</sup> United Nations Security Council, 2009, April 8, "Report of the Secretary-General on enhancing mediation and its support activities," 10.

Essentially based in dialogue and the mediated opening of communication channels between belligerents, mediation, if successful, can avoid the need to upscale or even use military or peacekeeping forces, measures that often risk escalating violence further by introducing more armed players. To this end it is also a relatively cheap intervention, requiring far fewer people and far less resources than many other conflict management techniques, such as peacekeeping. As a result there is less opportunity cost involved in decisions about whether to attempt mediation as a means of resolving a volatile situation. There are also fewer barriers to its use as it is less affected by shortages in international funding for conflict resolution and the associated delays involved. Perhaps most fundamentally, especially in the case of successful early introduction, mediation can avert the multiple human and economic costs of conflict.<sup>203</sup>

The aim of mediation is to help find a middle ground between conflicting parties and, through mediated discussion, hopefully begin to address the underlying causes of the conflict for the long term. As with conflict resolution, mediation is a process. A key thesis of Böhmelt<sup>204</sup> and Beardsley<sup>205</sup> is that mediation generally decreases uncertainty, and that cumulative mediations over time facilitate learning, which can help lead to the peaceful solving of a conflict. Mediation addresses conflict complexity and the lack of initial information transfer as the decrease of uncertainty facilitates the transfer of information between belligerents that would not otherwise be possible without a third party.<sup>206</sup> The value of this information transfer is emphasised by Regan and Aydin's research,<sup>207</sup> which suggests that the key to successful resolution of disputes is to reduce the asymmetry of information about the capabilities and incentives of parties, thus decreasing the risk of continued fighting and simultaneously increasing the chance that the parties will agree on a peaceful resolution.

It is with this information that mediators can also draw on their ability to be creative and flexible in their approach. Mediators can pool information about preferences, positions or interests of belligerents and then disseminate it to the actors, keep lines of communication open, provide

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<sup>203</sup> United Nations General Assembly, 2011, November 23, "United Nations Mediation: Experiences and Reflections from the Field," *Summary Report*, 1.

<sup>204</sup> Böhmelt, "Failing to succeed."

<sup>205</sup> Kyle Beardsley, 2008, "Agreement without peace? International mediation and time inconsistency problems," *American Journal of Political Science* 52 (4).

<sup>206</sup> Böhmelt, "Failing to succeed," 201.

<sup>207</sup> Patrick Regan and Aysegul Aydin, 2006, "Diplomacy and Other Forms of Intervention in Civil Wars," *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 50 (5): 740.

alternative views on issues or identify sets of mutually acceptable agreements.<sup>208</sup> Rauchhaus<sup>209</sup> adds that the value of mediators is in their ability to link issues and to help disputants overcome their psychological biases and misconceptions.

Mediation, unlike many other conflict management approaches, is important and useful at all stages of conflict and possible conflict cycles.<sup>210</sup> It can be preventative, used for diplomacy, a deadlock breaker or play an important role in post-conflict peace building and reconciliation. There is a lot of scope for use of mediation at a number of different levels: international, intranational, regional and right down to the community level. This is important as conflicts and structural conflicts affect society, in one way or another, at all levels. As a result, mediation has emerged as being consistently effective in both preventing escalation and promoting peaceful settlements, and been more effective than any other type of third party intervention.<sup>211</sup>

## **Drawbacks**

Despite its strengths, however, there are many cases wherein mediation has not worked, and naturally there are a number of weaknesses in the approach that contribute to this. Simply having so many variables leaves the door to failure wide open. Perhaps one major issue that plagues all conflict management approaches is that domestic and international conflicts are very complex, sometimes involving very high stakes. The belligerents and mediators face uncertainties about many factors pertaining to the outbreak of fighting that may hamper effective resolution.<sup>212</sup>

Mediation also relies very heavily on a few personalities and their ability to be reasonable, willing to negotiate and to be creative. Mediators must know something of the context of the conflict, be well informed and yet flexible and neutral. There can be too many players or parties to the conflict, or the 'representatives' may not represent unified groups, something that has long plagued attempts at successful mediation in places like the Democratic Republic of Congo. Mediations can also be

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<sup>208</sup> Kyle Beardsley, 2011, *The Mediation Dilemma* (New York: Cornell University Press), 36.

<sup>209</sup> Robert Rauchhaus, 2006, "Asymmetric Information, Mediation, and Conflict Management," *World Politics* 58 (2): 207.

<sup>210</sup> United Nations, "Experiences and Reflections," 1.

<sup>211</sup> Dixon in: Beber, "Question of Bias," 398.

<sup>212</sup> Böhmelt, "Failing to succeed," 199-200.

manipulated and used as a delay tactic to rearm and reorganise or seek a better deal, something that was seen over and over again in the Liberian civil war during the 1990s.<sup>213</sup>

When not clearly decided or agreed upon early, the offering of mediators by many different groups, often with divergent interests, can create the case where conflicting parties can go ‘mediator shopping’, playing off intermediaries against one another.<sup>214</sup> This can delegitimise the whole process. Who is involved, therefore, in both an intermediary capacity as well as with regards to the different parties of the conflict can severely impact the likelihood of a peaceful resolution.

Mediations can include states, political groups, armed groups, aggressors, victims or civil society, allowing opinions to be heard from all levels. A strength in many ways of mediation as an approach, it is also a weakness in that there are so many variables with regards to who is included and excluded from a process. The exact combination can critically affect negotiations or undermine the peace process on the ground entirely. According to the UN, “inclusive peace processes have multiple merits, especially if armed hardliners can be incorporated into a political settlement that includes new and widely accepted institutional and security arrangements”.<sup>215</sup> However, they also note that the inclusion of armed power groups runs the risk of marginalising other actors.<sup>216</sup> Especially in the case of extremist groups, inclusion can be very contentious, as they bring their ideologies with them to the mediation table. Some also feel that inclusion in the mediation process can bring legitimacy to groups with somewhat reprehensible ideologies, such as with the Taliban in Afghanistan for example.<sup>217</sup> Exclusion, however, can be equally problematic.

Managing ‘spoilers’, parties who believe that peace threatens their interests, is also a key consideration for whether to include particular groups. With spoilers being “one of the greatest risks to mediation”, managing their overall negative influence on perpetuating conflict, through inclusion or exclusion in the mediation process, is a delicate diplomatic and tactical process for

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<sup>213</sup> Sylvie Mahieu, 2007, “When Should Mediators Interrupt a Civil War? The Best Timing for a Ceasefire,” *International Negotiation* 12 (2): 215.

<sup>214</sup> United Nations, “Report of the Secretary-General,” 6.

<sup>215</sup> United Nations, “Experiences and Reflections,” 2.

<sup>216</sup> *Ibid*, 3-4.

<sup>217</sup> United Nations, “Report of the Secretary-General,” 8.

intermediaries.<sup>218</sup> Polarised belligerents may reserve their real thoughts at the table or anticipate the likely consequences of mediated negotiations,<sup>219</sup> consequently impeding mediations from addressing the issues at the core of the conflict. There are no hard and fast rules, and the case-by-case weighing of options can again be a weak point with mediation – leaving so much scope for failed attempts or compromises that are not socially optimal.

The final contentious consideration of mediation is when to interrupt a conflict situation with mediation in order to minimise the long-term impact as much as possible. Mahieu asks:

“Is it before or after negotiations on political reforms begin? Should mediators give priority to reaching a truce in order to save lives immediately while running the risk of prolonging the conflict? Or should they first promote the achievement of a political settlement that is likely to bring about a lasting peace and, with it, a definitive end to the carnage?”<sup>220</sup>

Mahieu<sup>221</sup> advocates for mediations to take place when belligerents have begun negotiating and have achieved a broad consensus as to how to deal with the political issues at the heart of the conflict. However, waiting and deciding when the situation is ‘ripe’ or at a point of being a ‘mutually hurting stalemate’ is no exact art and may only arise after years of painful conflict. For this reason, this approach is still contested on moral grounds, in both short-term and long-term considerations. It also emphasises the importance of preventative diplomacy in negating the commencement of conflict in the first place, most feasibly through the use of a number of conflict management approaches.

### **In combination with other approaches**

Naturally, mediation does not exist in isolation as a conflict management approach. With regard to the use of mediation at all stages of conflict, its effectiveness is almost invariably complimented by – or partly due to – the use of other concurrent approaches.<sup>222</sup> The process of facilitating a return to peace, of addressing the underlying causes of the conflict as well as avoiding the escalation of conflict to the point of armed combat in the first place, involves numerous social and political elements, and to this end requires a diverse set of approaches to overcome the associated

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<sup>218</sup> Ibid, 11.

<sup>219</sup> Beber, “Question of Bias,” 398-399.

<sup>220</sup> Mahieu, “Best Timing for a Ceasefire.”

<sup>221</sup> Ibid.

<sup>222</sup> United Nations, “Experiences and Reflections,” 1.

obstacles. Indeed, the combination and adaption of mediation with other conflict management strategies has and will help to further develop far more effective methods for managing conflict.

In the case of an uneasy state of peace wherein intervention has at least temporarily halted conflict, peacekeepers can provide mediators with the space, as well as buy time for them to develop a more comprehensive peace process.<sup>223</sup> The observation and fact-finding missions that usually accompany peacekeeping missions can be integral to the mediation process when there is no scope to physically enforce agreement. Information gained by these missions can be a valuable tool to bring to the negotiating table when trying to find common ground between belligerents as well as in holding parties accountable at a diplomatic level through the reduction of asymmetric information. Because the scope for finding peaceful common ground can be broadened by increasing the information to which the mediator and parties have access, it would seem natural that a sharing of information between mediators and peacekeeping missions should be emphasised.

Likewise, mediation can be adapted very well to a peacebuilding and reconciliation process dealing with extant post-conflict tensions and in avoiding the resumption of violence. In Kenya, the 2010 referendum remained peaceful following the violent eruptions surrounding the 2007 elections. This was at least in part attributed to the peacebuilding efforts of the intervening years, which had established regional mediations and community level 'peace committees' to help provide the conditions for a fair vote on the new constitution.<sup>224</sup> In Timor-Leste, the return of large numbers of refugees and internally displaced people between 2007 and 2009 caused conflict over land. The training and deployment of community mediators in this period helped to enable the peaceful return of thousands of people to their land by 2010, and as a result, mediation has been integrated into the newly established Department of Peacebuilding.<sup>225</sup> The use of local mediators with insider knowledge as a way to increase local capacity to deal with tensions peacefully serves a double purpose in promoting civil engagement and social cohesion through discussion.

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<sup>223</sup> Ibid, 2.

<sup>224</sup> Chetan Kumar and Jos De la Haye, 2011, "Hybrid Peacemaking: Building National "Infrastructures for Peace", " *Global Governance* 18: 16.

<sup>225</sup> Ibid, 16.

Certainly, the ultimate goal of conflict management is to address the underlying causes of conflict, removing the obstacles to lasting peace. The causes are overwhelmingly social issues that relate to degrees of access to resources, levels of civic engagement, levels of inequality, lack of social and personal freedom and inability to meet needs. Therefore, in order to address the causes of conflict, conflict management must look well beyond immediate conflict resolution issues and to the determinants of a healthy society.

Beyond peacebuilding and reconciliation, increasing levels of education and access to basic healthcare as well as to basic resources, with the help of domestic and international development and aid programs, could be seen to be long term conflict management. Kumar and De la Haye call this 'hybrid peacemaking' where there is increased internal capacity for managing recurring tensions at national and local levels, "so that new conflicts are transformed into opportunities for greater reform and inclusion, rather than violence, in an approach referred to as conflict transformation".<sup>226</sup> Through this approach, the combination of improved social factors brought about by collaborative approaches increases the capacity of mediation to draw on its strengths and work with other fields to creatively transform conflicts.

### **The conflict in Mali**

Following the preceding discussion, it is important to consider the potential for the implementation of mediation in current conflicts and structural conflict situations. As a short case study, this essay will discuss the plausibility of implementation of a mediation approach in the case of the contemporary conflict in Mali.

Fuelled and instigated by a number of historical rifts and tensions centred around the southern, 'African' political dominance in the country and associated economic and social discrimination against the mostly nomadic, Arab, northern tribal groups, a large scale rebellion in 2012 by a then coalition of northern rebel groups has severely affected hopes of peace in an already unstable country. The breakaway of a more moderate arm of the Islamist group *Ansar Dine* at the start of the year, however, has perhaps presented an opportunity for the effective use of mediation to develop a strategy to achieve lasting peace in the region. The leader, Alagbass Ag Intallah, has said

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<sup>226</sup> Ibid.

that his group, which calls itself the Islamic Movement for Azawad (IMA), is open to “inclusive political” dialogue to bring its conflict with the central government to an end.<sup>227</sup>

With the central government tired and destabilised by the events of last year, and reports that the MNLA (Azawad National Liberation Movement), a Touareg separatist group, has also joined or aligned itself with the IMA, an opportunity is presented to mediate talks between the central government and the two more moderate groups at a time when the influence of the hard-line Islamist group *Ansar Dine*, which has ties with the North African branch of Al-Qaeda, has been diluted. The conditions of current events may well be conducive to mediators looking to the central government to commit to creating better conditions and integration of the traditionally disenfranchised groups in the north in exchange for possible political concessions from rebels, which may include a degree of autonomy to the group rather than their outright separatist demands.

A mediation process, which may tactically exclude a weakened *Ansar Dine* or use a ‘departing train strategy’ to encourage them to join talks that may moderate their demands, could be productive. The moderates have signalled that they would be willing to defend themselves against their old allies if an agreeable peace deal could be negotiated,<sup>228</sup> so an agreement with the moderate groups could potentially lead to more stability in the north.

At a more local level, something akin to the Social Cohesion Program, a UNDP-supported national initiative instituted around the 2006 elections in Guyana, could be productive in assisting the peace process in the north. In the program, a network of local mediators worked between communities and decision-makers to generate productive civil dialogue, which leads to some positive outcomes in subsequent political reforms and in levels of social cohesion.<sup>229</sup> Programs using this informal application of mediation at a community level could help to overcome the prolonged violent and structural conflict that has plagued the mixed ethnic population of the north.

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<sup>227</sup> Peter Beaumont, 2013, January 24, “Mali rebel splinter group says it is ready for talks,” *The Guardian*, <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2013/jan/24/mali-rebel-splinter-group-talks>.

<sup>228</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>229</sup> Kumar and De la Haye, “Hybrid Peacemaking,” 15.

## **Conclusion**

Due to its strength as a conflict resolution tool, mediation has proven to be a crucial and effective instrument for the non-violent resolution of disputes. In not applying force or coercion, and involving belligerents as partners in a mutual exploration of alternatives, mediation can increase the sense of ownership, and therefore commitment, to peaceful resolution. It is a relatively cheap intervention; especially in cases of successful early application, it can avert the multiple human and economic costs of conflict. Through successive mediations, there is generally a reduction in asymmetrical information and uncertainty between parties, increasing the likelihood of and allowing for creativity in finding a peaceful resolution.

However, the mere existence of so many variables in a case-by-case approach to conflict management is a weakness, leaving the door open to failures. Vulnerabilities include the ability or personality of the mediator, the potential manipulation of the process by belligerents, the difficulty in managing spoilers, and finally, deciding when a conflict is 'ripe' for mediation in the first place. Each variable can critically affect the outcome.

In facilitating a return to peace, addressing the causes of as well as avoiding the escalation of violence requires a diverse set of approaches to overcome social and political obstacles. Increased information exchange between peacekeeping missions and mediators can broaden the scope for finding peaceful common ground. The use of community-level mediation for peacebuilding has, in many cases, helped to avoid the resumption of violence. Through other 'hybrid peacemaking' approaches, there is a lot of potential for conflict transformation wherein improved underlying social factors and mutually beneficial conflict management approaches increase the capacity for mediation to be effective in transforming conflicts into opportunities. In the case of current conflict in Mali, there is a lot of scope for mediation to be used to help resolve the crisis.

From the arguments presented in this paper, it is clear that, although there exist inherent weaknesses in the reliable success of the approach, mediation remains and is increasingly considered an important and effective conflict management approach.

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# STABILISING MALI: THE IMPORTANCE OF PEACEKEEPING

by Robert Yeomans

Since March 2012, Malians have experienced a military coup, civil war, peacekeeping intervention and most recently, presidential elections. Although the UN-sanctioned intervention appears to have succeeded in restoring state power and quelling the threat posed by radical Islamist groups, ongoing peace and stability are contingent on the Malian Government successfully negotiating a comprehensive agreement with the MNLA and its affiliates. The rebel groups currently maintain some control over the northern town of Kidal as agreed under the June ceasefire document (Ouagadougou Agreement). Despite the potential challenges a peacekeeping presence could have on the mediation process, this essay will nonetheless argue that peacekeeping is vital for securing short-term stability and providing guarantees that agreements will be enforceable. The cycle of northern violence will not be abated in the long-run, however, unless careful management of aid funding and mediation between all northern minority groups take place. To this end, the future Malian president needs to show commitment to fighting executive and judicial corruption, prioritising development in northern areas and increasing political participation amongst marginalised groups.

The continued deployment of armed peacekeepers is the most appropriate and effective method of maintaining short-term stability in Mali. Peacekeepers can serve as a guarantee to both parties that the terms of the Ouagadougou Agreement are adhered to and interference from potential spoiler groups is minimal. Short-term stability is crucial in order for constructive dialogue between the MNLA and the Malian Government to take place. The French-led military intervention was instrumental in halting rebel advances and liberating Kidal, Gao and Timbuktu from Islamic forces and Sharia law. The change in momentum also led to the main separatist faction, the MNLA, aligning itself with the government against the Islamists and postponing its demand for the creation of an independent Azawad state. UN-sanctioned military intervention undoubtedly played a vital role in bringing government and MNLA representatives to the peace table. Armed international peacekeepers can also ensure the diplomatic process continues. In reflecting on his 1994 empirical study, Diehl described peacekeeping as being “generally successful in maintaining cease-fires”.<sup>230</sup> Virginia Fortna found in her 2004 analysis that a ceasefire agreement was more likely to be adhered

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<sup>230</sup> J Michael Greig and Paul Diehl, 2005, “The Peacekeeping-Peacemaking Dilemma,” *International Studies Quarterly* 49 (4): 626.

to where a peacekeeping force was present.<sup>231</sup> A resumption of violence was almost 70% less likely following the deployment of UN peacekeepers in intrastate conflicts during the 1989-99 period.<sup>232</sup> Barbara Walter offers the explanation that peacekeepers act as a 'third party guarantee' that gives both parties greater assurances that neither signatory will cheat or renege on a written agreement.<sup>233</sup> Although there have been spectacular peacekeeping failures, such as in Bosnia and Rwanda, the conditions in Mali are far more congenial for effective peacekeeping. The rebels are restricted to a small area around Kidal, which enables easier monitoring of the crisis. Any developments can be quickly responded to, and decisive action taken. Furthermore, the UN peacekeeping mission in Mali (MINUSMA) is mandated to be a multidimensional operation that aims at re-establishing civil order, rehabilitating refugees and protecting human rights, to list but a few.<sup>234</sup> Over 12,000 peacekeepers are authorised, comprising mostly of military personnel but also of security and civilian members. Perhaps most beneficial is the prospect of short-term stability strengthening trust between the parties. Both sides have made allegations of human rights abuses and accused the other of breaching terms of the Ouagadougou Agreement. The MNLA will only disarm once it can trust that the government will honour any future peace agreement and trust that their immunity from reprisals is guaranteed. Peacekeepers are indispensable for enabling such an arrangement.

Another advantage of committing to a peacekeeping arrangement is that potential spoilers, such as dispelled northern Islamist groups or even the defeated presidential candidate, will not realistically be able to resort to violent measures to oppose peace talks. Barring exceptional events, the election frontrunner, Ibrahim Keita (IBK), who commands the support of almost every eliminated first round candidate – and perhaps more importantly, the approval of the popular junta leader, Amadou Sanogo – will win. In this scenario, post-election violence from Soumaila Cisse supporters is unlikely even if he contests the results. If there are peaceful protests, the presence of peacekeepers will be crucial for dissuading government security forces from imposing harsh crackdowns. Peacekeepers need to take proactive measures in promoting human rights and protecting the rights of civilians to demonstrate peacefully.

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<sup>231</sup> Fortna, Virginia, 2004, "Does Peacekeeping Keep Peace? International Intervention and the Duration of Peace After Civil War," *International Studies Quarterly* 48 (2): 282.

<sup>232</sup> Ibid.

<sup>233</sup> Barbara F. Walter, 2001, *Committing to Peace: The Successful Settlement of Civil Wars* (Princeton, Princeton University Press), 20.

<sup>234</sup> UN Security Council, 2013, April 25, "Resolution 2100," [http://www.un.org/en/peacekeeping/missions/minusma/documents/mali%20\\_2100\\_E\\_.pdf](http://www.un.org/en/peacekeeping/missions/minusma/documents/mali%20_2100_E_.pdf)

Engaging in a process of mediation is the most appropriate and logical step following the presidential elections. Although peacekeepers will provide the most effective foundation for ensuring short-term stability, some academic literature suggests that enforcement of a 'premature' ceasefire may undermine the efficacy of peace talks. The Malian Government is strategically in a stronger position than the rebels, who only remain in control of the small northern town of Kidal. The Mali military has greater numbers and is also benefiting from an EU training initiative, which is mandated until March 2014.<sup>235</sup> Western donors have also pledged to give billions of dollars in aid to the government in exchange for the holding of democratic elections. Although the current ceasefire arrangement requires that the future Malian president hold talks with the MNLA within 60 days of his election, the government may feel they have more to lose by negotiating with the rebels than by imposing a unilateral settlement. The MNLA is unlikely to give up on their goal of independence without the Malian Government making serious concessions of their own. MNLA's head European representative, Moussa Assarid, claimed recently that resorting to violence was an option should negotiations fail.<sup>236</sup> The presidential frontrunner, Ibrahim Keita, appears to favour a hard-line policy towards the rebels – a position that resonates with the majority of southerners, who do not wish to see any concessions made to the separatists.<sup>237</sup> There is a real danger that either party will make unreasonable demands and walk away from peace talks. Proponents of the 'hurting stalemate' concept may also point to the large disparity in interests and military might between the parties and conclude that the peacekeeping mission is actually preventing the conflict from becoming 'ripe' for resolution. On this account, warring groups must recognise that neither side can win, and that mediation is preferable to a costly and indefinite stalemate.<sup>238</sup> The peacekeeping arrangement is hardly costly for either party, and it could be argued that there is currently too little incentive for parties to pursue mediation. Western donors therefore need to consider withholding economic aid until after a comprehensive peace agreement has been signed. The imposition of a deadline (or departing train strategy) may provide the necessary impetus for the Malian Government to stay involved in the mediation process. The status quo may hamper the efficacy of future mediation, but

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<sup>235</sup> Agence France-Presse, 2013, July 17, "Malian army in better shape than 6 months ago," *Global Post*, <http://www.globalpost.com/dispatch/news/afp/130717/malian-army-better-shape-6-months-ago>

<sup>236</sup> Agence France-Presse, 2013, August 5, "Mali Tuaregs threaten fresh uprising if no deal on autonomy," *The National*, <http://www.thenational.ae/news/world/africa/mali-tuaregs-threaten-fresh-uprising-if-no-deal-on-autonomy>

<sup>237</sup> Daniel Flynn and Tiemoko Diallo, 2013, August 9, "Front-runner in Mali election runoff pledges to reinforce peace," *Thomson Reuters Foundation*, <http://www.trust.org/item/20130809224223-g3870>

<sup>238</sup> J Michael Greig and Paul Diehl, 2005, "The Peacekeeping-Peacemaking Dilemma," *International Studies Quarterly* 49 (4): 628.

the importance in maintaining short-term stability through peacekeeping so that elections can take place should outweigh those concerns.

The long-term stability of Mali, however, rests not on the presence of foreign troops, but on future Malian Governments addressing the grievances of all northern minority populations. Tuareg chiefs rebelled against French colonial occupation, and since Malian independence in 1960, there have been no less than five organised rebellions. In 2012, the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights warned, “it should be noted that increasing ethnic tensions in Mali foster a climate that is not favourable to national unity. If nothing is done about it and if these tensions are, in addition, manipulated for political purposes, Mali is likely to experience violence on an unprecedented scale.”<sup>239</sup> Breaking the cycle of Tuareg uprisings is paramount to securing peace in the future. Tor Benjaminsen argues that, although the peoples living in northern Mali endure greater hardship from environmental challenges such as desertification and drought than their southern counterparts, it is the overwhelming perception of political marginalisation felt by most Tuaregs that has fuelled recurring violent rebellion. “The lack of appreciation for pastoral life and production, the lack of self-determination and involvement in political life, and the fact that Mali was governed from the south are clearly the root causes.”<sup>240</sup> He points in particular to the early modernisation policies of Modibo Keita, which threatened the nomadic lifestyle central to Tuareg culture and identity.<sup>241</sup> The fact that the first violent Tuareg uprising occurred only three years after independence is indicative of how quickly the nomads were able to transfer the label of oppressive coloniser from the French to the Malian Government. The fact that Tuaregs have been the most volatile minority group in Mali despite representing a mere fraction of the total northern population gives weight to the argument that identity has, at least historically, been a significant fuel for the recurring violence. However, Jean-Pierre Olivier de Sardan, head of Niger’s Lasdel research centre, strongly contests the marginalisation narrative, instead arguing, “The image of the Tuareg as victims of specific discrimination in the political sphere of Mali does not correspond to reality.” To support this claim, he points to the fact that Tamasheq, their native tongue, is taught as part of the primary school curriculum, and that Malians of Tuareg descent are represented in some of the highest echelons of politics, including senior ministers

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<sup>239</sup> UN Human Rights Council, 2012, January 7, “Agenda Items 2 and 4: Report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights on the situation of human rights in Mali,” [http://www.ohchr.org/Documents/HRBodies/HRCouncil/RegularSession/Session22/A-HRC-22-33\\_en.pdf](http://www.ohchr.org/Documents/HRBodies/HRCouncil/RegularSession/Session22/A-HRC-22-33_en.pdf)

<sup>240</sup> Tor Benjaminsen, 2008, “Does Supply-Induced Scarcity Drive Violent Conflicts in the African Sahel? The Case of the Tuareg Rebellion in Northern Mali,” *Journal of Peace Research* 45 (6): 832.

<sup>241</sup> *Ibid*, 828.

of state institutions and even Prime Ministers.<sup>242</sup> In order to explain why mistreatment of all northern minorities, including Songhoy, Arma and Arabs, resulted in an almost exclusively Tuareg separatist movement, Olivier de Sardan suggests the movement is entirely socially constructed.<sup>243</sup> Separatist leaders have managed to draw on a fabricated 'ethnic great narrative' and have "given precedence to the recourse to violence as its natural expression".<sup>244</sup> He makes the point that not only does the aim of independence not resonate with other minority groups, but it is not even popular amongst the majority of Tuaregs.<sup>245</sup> Based on his analysis, instigating rebellion is profitable for a select minority of northerners who invariably benefit disproportionately from aid funding. Regardless of whether one agrees that ethnic divides have been constructed and exploited by the minority to garner military support, or whether one sees the early policies of modernisation impacting disproportionately upon the cultural lifestyles of the Tuaregs, it should be undeniable that aid funding needs to benefit all northerners, regardless of ethnicity. The MNLA does not represent the interests of the majority of Malians living in Azawad. This is evidenced by the emergence of separate Arab, Songhai and Fulani militia groups during the 1990s to counteract the Tuareg rebel presence following the complete withdrawal of government troops. The fact that other northern ethnic minorities have not violently pursued their political goals should not deny them representation at the mediation table. It would be unwise for the Malian Government to make any concessions about granting greater autonomy to the Tuareg population without first engaging in an inclusive dialogue with community leaders from all ethnic groups. Furthermore, aid funding needs to be carefully distributed, ensuring that expenditure is transparent and claims of embezzlement are thoroughly investigated. Mali already has significant corruption-fighting measures as a result of implementing some of the World Bank's recommendations in 2002. The Office of the Auditor General, for example, provides independent monitoring of government institutions. The World Bank or UN should authorise another report into the strength of Mali's anti-corruption measures. The mediation process should not exclude northern minority groups whose lives will likely be impacted by any peace agreement reached by the Malian Government and MNLA. Furthermore, the distribution of aid needs to be transparent and prioritised toward northern development projects that improve services, living conditions and employment prospects.

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<sup>242</sup> Jean-Pierre Olivier de Sardan, 2012, December, *The "Tuareg question" in Mali today*, <http://www.bu.edu/wara/files/2013/06/mali-the-Tuareg-question.pdf>

<sup>243</sup> Ibid, 35.

<sup>244</sup> Ibid.

<sup>245</sup> Ibid, 36.

Finally, in a democracy the power of grassroots humanist programs should not be underestimated in changing popular perceptions and softening divisive identity narratives and government policies. Some of the most inspiring programs currently operate in some of the most volatile regions of the world. In the Middle East, the Blood Relations Project encourages Israelis and Palestinians to come together and donate blood in a symbolic gesture of human solidarity.<sup>246</sup> These programs also enhance political participation amongst those who would otherwise feel powerless to express their opinion or engage in discussions on political issues. Broadening the scope of empathy and eroding the ‘them versus us’ narrative, which persists currently between the Malian northern and southern populations, is needed for true positive peace to prosper. Perhaps a grassroots movement could help carve a new, united Malian identity that rejects the use of violence and fosters interethnic dialogue.

Democracy in Mali may be on the verge of being restored, but unless a concerted effort is made to reconciliation, history is doomed to repeat itself. Increasing political participation, fighting corruption (both judiciary and executive), rebuilding and resupplying conflict-affected areas and providing employment through development programs are important measures to improving living conditions and building positive peace in Mali.

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<sup>246</sup> See: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3GZxLcGSCow>. See also, ‘Israel loves Iran’ social networking campaign: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6Lp-NMaU0r8>.

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